

The ALABAMA REVIEW

A Quarterly Journal of Alabama History

VOLUME III • APRIL, 1950 • NUMBER 2

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Published by UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESS, *University, Alabama*
in Co-operation with the ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Plantation Medicine In The Old South

By WEYMOUTH T. JORDAN

IN THE ANTE-BELLUM PERIOD there existed a general belief among white southerners, who in 1860 owned about 4,000,000 slaves valued at \$2,000,000,000, that the Negro was not a member of the same species as a white man.¹ Even professional and non-professional medical practitioners contended that he possessed peculiarities which made him either susceptible or immune to certain ailments and diseases. At the same time there does not seem to have been available a well-known or widely circulated, satisfactory one-volume book on medical treatment of Negroes. Indeed, evidence will be presented here that leads to the conclusion that such a book did not exist.² Also, as a leading authority of the history of medicine has concluded, "It is a curious fact that . . . Southern [medical college] faculties never introduced any course dealing especially with Southern diseases or the Negroes" in the ante-bellum period.³ If college courses on Negro medicine and diseases had been offered, the profes-

¹ This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Alabama Academy of Science, Troy, May 6, 1948. It is an outgrowth of research conducted under grants-in-aid (1940, 1941) from the Social Science Research Council.

² William Frederick Norwood, *Medical Education in the United States before the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1944), p. 398, states that the Surgeon General's Library, Washington, D. C., that is, the Army Medical Library, is "the best medical library in the country today," and that it "had its beginning in 1845." In 1861 the Library does not seem to have contained a book on Negro medicine similar to the one which the present writer has been seeking (*Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*, Washington, 1888, 1st Series, IX, 696-697).

³ Richard H. Shryock, "Medical Practice in the Old South," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXIX, 169 (April, 1930).

sors would have possessed no separate textbook on the subjects and would have been forced to turn to articles in various contemporary periodicals and to fugitive chapters in professional and popular medical books for their reading.⁴ However that may be, white Alabamians and other southerners demonstrated an absorbing interest in the health of their slaves and it is generally known that slave-holding planters and others were seriously concerned with the problem. Historians, too, have been active in studying both general and Negro medicine in specific areas of the South.⁵ But

⁴ Some leading medical periodicals of the pre-Civil War South were: *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal* (Augusta, 1836-1867); *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery* (Louisville, 1840-1855); *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* (New Orleans, 1844-); *Charleston Medical Journal and Review* (Charleston, 1846-1860); *Transylvania Medical Journal* (Louisville, 1849-1854); and *New Orleans Medical News and Hospital Gazette* (New Orleans, 1854-1861). Other publications of varying utility to planters were: J. B. Dazille, *Observations sur les Maladies des Nègres* (Paris, 1776); *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves, in the Sugar Colonies. By a Professional Planter* (London, 1811); John C. Gunn, *Gunn's Domestic Medicine, or Poor Man's Friend*, 4th ed. (Madison, Tennessee, 1835); J. Hume Simons, *The Planter's Guide and Family Book of Medicine*, 2nd ed. (Charleston, 1848); James W. Mahoney, *The Cherokee Physician; or Indian Guide to Health, As Given by Richard Foreman, A Cherokee Doctor . . .* (Asheville, 1849); Daniel Drake, *A Systematic Treatise on the Principal Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America* (Cincinnati, 1850); J. H. Van Evrie, *Negroes and Negro Slavery* (New York, 1853); and J. C. Nott and G. R. Glidden, *Types of Mankind* (Philadelphia, 1854).

⁵ See, for example, James Battle Avirett, *The Old Plantation; . . .* (New York, 1901), pp. 47-49; Minnie Clare Boyd, *Alabama in the Fifties, A Social History* (New York, 1931), pp. 178-195, 224-225; J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940), pp. 29-31; F. Garvin Davenport, *Ante-Bellum, A Social History, 1800-1860* (Oxford, Ohio, 1943), pp. 80-106; Charles S. Davis, *The Cotton Kingdom in Alabama* (Montgomery, 1939), pp. 86-89; Ralph Betts Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1933), pp. 37, 106, 163-171, 200, 214, 218-219; William Ransom Hogan, *The Texas Republic, A Social and Economic History* (Norman, 1946), pp. 224-244; Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina, A Social History* (Chapel Hill, 1937), pp. 527-529, 717-763; Thomas Cary Johnson, Jr., *Scientific Interests in the Old South* (New York, 1936), pp. 80, 88, 145, 167-171; Weymouth T. Jordan, *Hugh Davis and His Alabama Plantation* (University, Alabama, 1948), pp. 85-91, 94-95; Hunter McGuire, "Progress of Medicine in the South," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, XVII, 3-12 (1889); Martha Carolyn Mitchell, "Health and the Medical Profession in the Lower South, 1845-1860," *Journal of Southern History*, X, 424-446 (November, 1944); Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York, 1918), pp. 49, 58, 62, 243, 252, 253, 256, 263, 275, 289, 300, 303, 310, 322, 323, 387, 404, and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (New York, 1929), pp. 175, 226, 231, 247, 256, 281, 283, 291, 298; Shryock, *op. cit.*, XXIX, 160-178 (April, 1930); Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (New York, 1933), pp. 45-53; and Rosser H. Taylor,

no writer seems to have attempted anything resembling a synthesis on Negro medicine from the viewpoint of the ante-bellum agriculturist's interest in the subject. This paper, with its emphasis on Alabama, is an effort in that direction.

Medical treatment of both whites and slaves in the United States before 1861, though flourishing, was harsh and in the light of present-day information, mostly a shocking procedure. A survey of various so-called "recipes" and home remedies leads to the conclusion that Americans were indeed a hardy race. They had to be strong in will and in body to undergo and survive many of the customary medical ordeals imposed upon them by their families, friends, and physicians. Every imaginable object, including iron, roots, bark, soot, soil, charcoal, animals, teas, rust, was concocted into home-made medicines. Trained physicians were inclined to experiment almost as much as domestic practitioners, and the death rate was appalling.

The subject of medical care of slaves attracted enough attention to find its way into fiction, one southern novelist going so far as to send one of her ante-bellum characters away to medical school specifically to train himself better to treat his slaves.⁶ Maintenance of plantation hospitals, elaborately in some cases, was common throughout the pre-Civil War South.⁷ A Negress was often designated as plantation nurse, and white mistresses and masters, in tradition and fact, looked after sick slaves.⁸ Overseers were generally expected to super-

Ante-Bellum South Carolina: A Social and Cultural History (Chapel Hill, 1942), pp. 90-106.

⁶ Elizabeth Meriwether, *Black and White* (New York, 1883); this book is mentioned in Francis Pendleton Gaines, *The Southern Plantation, A Study in the Development and Accuracy of a Tradition* (New York, 1925), p. 220.

⁷ *Southern Agriculturist*, I, 523-529 (December, 1828); *American Farmer*, X, 346-347 (January 16, 1829); *DeBow's Review*, X, 621-625 (June, 1851); XXII, 38-44 (January, 1857); *Southern Cultivator*, X, 227 (August, 1852), XVII, 169-170 (June, 1859).

⁸ *Farmer's Register*, IV, 495 (December, 1836); *Southern Cultivator*, V, 67 (May, 1847), XI, 227-228 (August, 1853); *DeBow's Review*, XIV, 176-177 (February, 1853). A South Carolina physician, who had practiced since 1833 "on the planta-

vise every-day medical treatment of their charges,⁹ some of them believing that they were more competent than trained physicians.¹⁰ One doctor wrote in 1853, "Much error and obscurity still hang over the important subjects of the management of our Negro peasantry. . . . The profession which deals with all the agencies influencing both mind and body, is better qualified, than any other, to throw light on these important subjects to southern agriculture . . . medicine becomes, from necessity, an associate of agriculture. . . ." ¹¹ And an Alabama physician, Robert J. Draughon of Claiborne, lamented the "domestic treatment" of diseases. If professionally trained doctors were called in on cases, according to him, such a practice would "save the subjects themselves much suffering."¹²

Southern practitioners at times went to great lengths to attend properly to their Negro patients.¹³ Erasmus D. Fen-

tions of Col. Wade Hampton, . . . Col. Richard Singleton, Maj. Thos. Taylor, B. F. Taylor, Esq., and others," informed the governor of his state in 1858: "On every plantation the sick nurse, or doctor woman, is usually the most intelligent female on the place; and she has full authority under the physician, over the sick" (Robert W. Gibbs to R. F. W. Allston, March 6, 1858, in *ibid.*, XXIV, 321-324, April, 1858).

⁹ *Ibid.*, XVIII, 339-345 (March, 1855); *Southern Cultivator*, II, 166 (October 16, 1844), V, 61-62 (April, 1847), VII, 103 (July, 1849), X, 227 (August, 1852).

¹⁰ For example, the overseer of a large estate near Darien, South Carolina, concluded after twenty-six years experience: "I have found physicians of little service, except in surgical cases. An intelligent [Negro] woman will in a short time learn the use of medicine" (*Southern Agriculturist*, I, 523-529, December, 1828). See the *American Farmer*, X, 346-347 (January 16, 1829) for a reprint of this remark. At the time it was made there were 238 "Negroes from fifteenth years down" on the plantations directed by the overseer; and this number did not include slave men and women, of course.

¹¹ "Medicine and Agriculture," *DeBow's Review*, XIV, 203-204 (March, 1853).

¹² *Southern Cultivator*, VIII, 66-67 (May, 1850).

¹³ On June 23, 1853, a physician of Lowndesboro, Alabama, P. N. Cilly, wrote as follows to a Doctor Mason of Charleston, Virginia: "I am treating the case of a yellow girl named Alice who was formerly owned by a Mr. Willis in your place. Her case seems stubborn & Chronic and I do not at all feel satisfied with my success under the lights now placed before me. I learn that you have had charge of the case & treated it for some time. Will you have the goodness to inform me as to her condition when you saw her, her habits of life, if you knew them, and as to whether she was suffering under any specific or constitutional taint. By an insight into these points, I apprehend the treatment of her case will be

ner, a New Orleans physician, during several years collected information on "peculiar diseases of negroes" from doctors "resident in all parts of the South and South-west. . . ." ¹⁴ Agricultural organizations, including the Alabama State Agricultural Society, founded in 1855, offered premiums and awards to the writers of best articles on Negro care and management. ¹⁵ Many cure-alls were available, of course, and calomel a standby. ¹⁶ "Swaim's Panacea" was presented to the public for many years, its manufacturer claiming on one occasion that it would cure "incipient consumption, scrofula, general debility, white swelling, rheumatism, diseases of the liver and skin, and all diseases arising from impurities of the blood, and the effect of mercury. . . ." It was described as being especially advantageous in treating "Negroes who are confined in large numbers on plantations in hot climates. . . ." Moreover, "planters would study their own interest as well as that of humanity, by keeping always a supply of Swaim's Panacea, which appears to be the only thing which can be relied on in such cases. . . ." ¹⁷ Another

rendered more efficient . . . " (P. N. Cilly Diary, in possession of Mrs. J. M. Richardson, Auburn, Alabama).

¹⁴ *DeBow's Review*, IX, 252 (August, 1850). One authority has described Fenner as "the pillar of medical journalism in the Deep South, . . ." (George Worthington Adams, "Confederate Medicine," *Journal of Southern History*, VI, 159, May, 1940).

¹⁵ *Southern Agriculturist*, I, 284 (June, 1828). See also a copy of the prize-winning essay of Colonel R. H. Powell, of Chunnenugee, Alabama, presented at the 1856 annual meeting of the Alabama State Agricultural Society. His essay won a prize of \$25 (*American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South*, I, 68-71, March, 1857). This publication will be cited hereafter as *Planter*.

¹⁶ In 1858 a Mississippi planter reported: "Calomel (an excellent remedy in the hands of one who knows its proper use) is in very many cases injurious to sick negroes, given as it is so indiscriminately. I am persuaded that many cases of fever can be cured without it. . . ." (*DeBow's Review*, XXV, 572, November, 1858). The medicine was indeed a best seller, however. *Niles' National Register*, LXVIII, 416 (August 30, 1845) states: "CALOMEL, to the amount of 17,000 pounds weight, has been prepared and sold within three years by one house in Philadelphia . . . at from \$50 to \$500 per pound . . . and . . . at least six times that quantity has been sold by other houses of the city in the same time."

¹⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XIV, 634 (June, 1853). For a report of professional physicians on the value of this medicine, see "QUACK MEDICINES" in *American Farmer*, IX, 23-24 (April 4, 1828). Doctors of questionable repute also practiced before

widely advertised item was "The Great Family and Plantation Medicine! Wright's Indian Vegetable Pills." This concoction, its dispensers asserted, was "thoroughly efficacious," and cured fever, ague, bilious fever, purified the blood, aided the circulation, and improved general health.¹⁸ The Central Pharmacy of Mobile, operated by B. Frank Meslier, seems to have been an important source of medical supplies for ante-bellum Alabamians. Meslier advertised in 1855: "Bear in mind that I respectfully invite Families, Physicians, and the public generally, in the city and country, to my increasing assortment of Drugs, Chemicals, Family Medicines, fresh Garden and Flower Seed, plants, Flowers, Herbs, Patent Medicines, Thomsonian and Eclectic Medicines, Leeches—all of which have been selected with the greatest care and are known to be fresh, excellent and genuine."¹⁹

"Medical chests for Plantations" were also advertised in the 1850's.²⁰ In 1860 a leading periodical stated, "Every planter should have, of course, a well-furnished *medical chest* and understand something of the nature and use of medicines." Trumpeted at the same time was a selection of "Medicines for a Plantation of 50 to 100 Negroes."²¹ That

the Civil War. *Niles' Weekly Register*, LI, 112 (October 15, 1836) designated physicians in New York City as: "Regulars, irregulars, Broussaïans, Sangradorians, Morrissonians, Brandrethians, Beechitarians, botanics, regular botanics, Thomasonians, reformed Thomasonians, theoretical, practical, experimental, dogmatical, emblematical, magnetical, electical, electrical, diplomatical, homeopathians, rootists, herbists, florists and quacks."

¹⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XVII, 544 (November, 1854). The pills were also sold in the South in Charleston, New Orleans, Mobile and elsewhere.

¹⁹ *Mobile Directory and Commercial Supplement, for 1855-1856* (Mobile, 1855), n. p.

²⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XV, 434 (October, 1853).

²¹ This selection, selling for \$50, consisted of: "Four ounces of Quinine; one quart of Laudanum; one quart of paregoric; one quart of syrup of quills; one quart of hive syrup; one quart of sweet spirits of nitre; one quart of hartshorn liniment; one quart of spirits of hartshorn; one quart of essence of peppermint; one quart of essence of ginger; one quart of spirits of camphor; one quart of cough mixture; one pint of antimonial wine; half pound of calomel (English); half pound of blue mass; half pound of powdered ipecac; one pound of sugar of lead; half pound of calcined magnesia; one pound of flour of sulphur; one pound of gum

such chests were used is borne out by a Georgian's testimony in May, 1857: "I have noticed planters, among whose family I practiced my profession, come every year to me to get a list of family supplies of medicine, and who kept their medicine-chest, and who devoted much of their time to the perusal of Ewel's Medical Companion, Buchan and Gunn's Domestic Practice of Medicine, particularly in reference to the remedial treatment of their negroes. . . ." ²² One planter followed a more individual method of treating ailing slaves, however: "If a negro is sick a pint of corn is deducted from his allowance every day: because if he is really sick the nurse supplies him with good gruel, he therefore, does not require corn, and if he is merely shamming, a reduction of rations, like stopping a sailor's grog, will induce him to be more active in the performance of his duties." ²³

Agricultural journals of the ante-bellum period, more than any other type of periodical, contain numerous references and discussions of plantation medicine. ²⁴ General medical books and other contemporary publications with their descriptions and treatments of various diseases and ailments

camphor; one pound of bicarbonate of soda; one pound of prepared chalk; one pound of powdered alum; one pound of blistering ointment; one pound of simple cerate; six pounds of epsom salts; two pounds of senna leaves; two pounds of cream of tartar; half pound of powdered rhubarb; half pound of Dover's powder; half pound of powdered jalap; half pound of gum asafoetida (best); half pound of sulphate of zinc; one pound of saltpetre (pure); two pounds of mustard; four ounces of tartar emetic; one ounce of powdered opium; two dozen Fahnestock's vermifuge; half dozen of sun cholera mixture; two gallons of castor oil (best); one gallon of spirits of turpentine; one yard of adhesive plaster (in case); one two-ounce graduated measure; one pint metallic syringe; one medicine chest book" (*ibid.*, XXVIII, 493-494, April, 1860).

²² *Southern Cultivator*, XV, 140-142 (May, 1857).

²³ *Southern Agriculturist*, IV, 350-354 (July, 1831); reprinted in *American Farmer*, XIII, 138-139 (July 15, 1831).

²⁴ For a discussion of the importance and reception of ante-bellum agricultural publications throughout the United States, see Albert L. Demaree, *The American Agricultural Press, 1819-1860* (New York, 1941), *passim*, and "The Farm Journals, Their Editors, and Their Public, 1830-1860," *Agricultural History*, XV, 182-188 (October, 1941).

were also available to both planters and doctors.²⁵ It is more than probable, too, that many treatments for whites were applicable for slaves. But little evidence exists to indicate that a majority of planters or doctors actually prescribed different treatments for persons solely because of their color, despite all their talk and writing about the subject. Thus, it may be said, and perhaps rightly, that there was no professional need for a special, a different type of medical care for Negroes.²⁶ If this were absolutely the case, however, why was a book on Negro medicine projected publicly by an Alabama-Georgia physician as late as November, 1859?

Aside from such important aspects of the question as the possible economic and professional desirability of a book on

²⁵ As listed in an account rendered, April 3, 1838, by Gregg and Elliot, booksellers of Philadelphia, the following items were shipped to Stephen Davis, a physician of Greensboro, Alabama: "Smith Arteries, Combe Phrenology, Armstrong's Practice, Lincoln's Botany, Paxton's Anatomy, Thompson Inflammation, Wannsbrecht Germ, Arnott's Physics, Good's Book Nature, Hall on Blood, Gibbons's Surgery, Dunghson's Physiology, Dispensatory, Goddard on Nerves, Gahard on Chest, Hare's Chemistry, Cooper's Surgical Dictionary, Smellies Philosophy" (Hugh Davis Papers, in possession of N. J. and Thad Davis, Marion, Alabama). G. M. Gamble lived and practiced medicine at Pinckneyville, Talladega county, Alabama, during the 1840's and 1850's. Among his medical books (now in possession of Miss Majorie Gamble, Columbus, Georgia) were: Elisha Bartlett, *The History, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Typhoid and Typhus Fever* (Philadelphia, 1842); N. Chapman, *Elements of Therapeutics and Materia Medica* (Philadelphia, 1831); Robley Dunglison, *Medical Lexicon, A Dictionary of Medical Science* (Philadelphia, 1856); W. W. Gerhard, *On the Diagnosis of the Diseases of the Chest* (Philadelphia, 1836); Jonathan Perira, *The Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics* (Philadelphia, 1838); Robert Thomas, *The Modern Practice of Physic* (Philadelphia, 1817); Alf A. L. M. Velpeau, *An Elementary Treatise on Midwifery; or, Principles of Tokology* (Philadelphia, 1838); and George B. Wood, *A Treatise on the Practice of Medicine* (Philadelphia, 1858).

²⁶ A common practice of southern planters was maintenance of a plantation medicine book in which they collected so-called "recipes" from various sources. Most often they made no distinction between treatment of whites and blacks. See, for example, Weymouth T. Jordan, "Martin Marshall's Book: Introduction," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, II, 156-168 (Summer, 1940), "Martin Marshall's Book: Herb Medicine," *ibid.*, II, 443-459 (Winter, 1940), and "Martin Marshall's Book: Homemade Medicine," *ibid.*, 117-129 (Spring, 1941). Marshall was a South Carolinian who moved to Fort Claiborne, Alabama, in 1815, where he remained until his death in 1865. Between 1802 and 1865 he collected a voluminous private medical book, obtaining items from agricultural journals, newspapers, friends, relatives, slaves, and travelers on the Alabama river.

Negro medicine,²⁷ which is the chief concern here, another feature of the problem presents itself. As is well known, there existed in the South before 1861, as well as later, a widespread belief that blacks were not the same physiologically and anatomically as whites. Southern doctors, led in this thought by the indomitable Josiah C. Nott of Mobile, studied long and diligently to sustain the belief on scientific grounds.²⁸ Also, as has been so admirably demonstrated by recent historical studies, their findings were incorporated among the southern arguments advanced before the Civil War to justify the institution of slavery.²⁹ Since such was palpably the case, a question immediately comes to mind: in the long course of the North-South dispute over the merits of slavery, why did southern physicians fail to bring out a full-fledged book on Negro medicine? Would not such a book have been of inestimable propaganda value to white southerners, politicians especially, when they argued that the Negro was inferior and different? If such a book were released, why has it not received attention from historians? Could it have been that pre-Civil War southerners, including doctors, preachers,

²⁷ Shryock, *op. cit.*, XXIX, 174-175 (April, 1930), reminds his reader that many southern planters actually neglected to provide adequate medical care for their slaves.

²⁸ T. C. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 79, 86, 138-140, 145, 169, 174, contains references to Nott's activities, emphasizing his vicissitudes in regard to his writings on the Negro. See also Richard H. Shryock, "Cultural Factors in the History of the Old South," *Journal of Southern History*, V, 337-338 (August, 1939). Excellent information on Nott's publications and activities is located in *DeBow's Review*, VII, 377 (October, 1849), IX, 243-245 (August, 1850), X, 113-132 (February, 1851), X, 329-332 (March, 1851), XVI, 654 (June, 1854), XXI, 63-70 (July, 1856), XXIII, 70-77 (July, 1857).

²⁹ For discussions of ante-bellum white southerners' justification of slavery on grounds of their ethnological and physical superiority, see William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 242-284; Arthur Y. Lloyd, *The Slavery Controversy, 1831-1860* (Chapel Hill, 1939), pp. 222-244, 249, 267. Expressions and attitudes of white Alabamians and other southerners on Negro inferiority while the former were drawing up the constitution of the Confederate States of America may be found in Jesse T. Carpenter, *The South as a Conscious Minority, 1789-1861, A Study in Political Thought* (New York, 1930), pp. 245-254.

"poor-whites" and others who justified slavery on ethnological grounds, considered the question settled irrefutably by the scattered medical and popular works which were published on the Negro? Moreover, it seems that a practical medical book for Negroes would have served a worthy purpose from both economic and humane standpoints. If the Negro did indeed differ from the white, should he not have been treated differently? Strangely enough, it appears that only one especially extensive effort toward such a convenient one-volume manual was conceived and attempted and advertised before the Civil War. That effort, it should be emphasized, was made from a strictly professional standpoint, although, as will become immediately evident, the author was most definitely a member of the Nott school of thought. The handbook in question was prepared by John Stainbach Wilson, a physician who at the time resided in Columbus, Georgia, and who earlier had lived and practiced for a number of years in South Alabama. The title of his work, as announced, was "The Plantation and Family Physician: A Work for Families generally and for Southern Slaveowners especially. Embracing the Peculiarities and Diseases, the Medical and Hygienic Management of Negroes, together with the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of the Principal Diseases common to Whites and Blacks, etc., etc."³⁰

On the basis of available information this book never reached print,³¹ although the public was notified in December, 1860, that it had been prepared for publication. Its passage through the press, if it ever reached the hands of a publisher, was presumably interrupted by the coming of the

³⁰ *Planter*, IV, 560 (December, 1860).

³¹ The book is not mentioned in such major bibliographical compilations as those of Joseph Sabin, Orville A. Roorbach, and James Kelly. It does not appear in S. Austin Allibone's famous *Critical Dictionary*. It is not listed in the *American Catalogue* or the *United States Catalogue*. It is not included in the extensive Union Catalog or the Catalog of the Library of Congress.

Civil War. That Wilson was undaunted and still hoped to print his manuscript is borne out by specific evidence, however. In 1863, while a surgeon in the Confederate Army, he wrote a sixteen-page booklet, *The Southern Soldier's Health Guide*,³² designed for use by troops in the field.³³ On its cover appears the advertisement: "Now ready for the press. The plantation and family physician; a work for families generally and slave-owners specially: . . . By John Stainbach Wilson, M. D. This work is now ready for the press, and will be published as soon as the war is over. . . ." Thus, as late as 1863 Wilson still planned to publish his account of Negro medicine. But he was doomed to disappointment. When the South lost its military fight, former slave-owners no longer possessed their old intimate or economic interest in the Negro, and their solicitude for his health disappeared. After 1865 the earlier urge for a publication such as Wilson had proposed was gone.³⁴

Since Wilson's book fell short of publication, a series of his articles, evidently a preliminary to the longer study, assumes special significance. They are not the only items of their sort to be published in the South before 1861, to be sure, but they comprise one of the most extensive efforts of the ante-bellum period to place the subject of Negro medi-

³² The *Health Guide* was printed by West and Johnston (Richmond); a copy is on deposit in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

³³ Adams, *op. cit.*, VI, 151 (May, 1940) states that "The Civil War was fought in the very last years of the medical middle ages." For references to Civil War health conditions by two Mississippi enlisted men, see Weymouth T. Jordan, "Hugh Harris Robison Letters," *Journal of Mississippi History*, I, 53-59 (January, 1939) and "Mathew Andrew Dunn Letters," *ibid.*, I, 110-127 (April, 1939).

³⁴ "On the old plantations, masters had possessed an obvious economic interest in the health of slaves; and they had sometimes provided the latter with crude sanitary regulations and free medical attendance" (Richard H. Shryock, *The Development of Modern Medicine*, New York, 1947, p. 239). See also Weymouth T. Jordan, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, XI, 47-61 (1939) and F. L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (Evanston, Illinois, 1896), *passim*.

cine before the southern public.³⁵ Most of the essays appeared under the title, "The Peculiarities and Diseases of Negroes," in the *American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South*, a leading agricultural journal edited by another physician, Dr. Noah B. Cloud, of Montgomery, Alabama.³⁶ They were widely circulated, as was usually the case with items carried in early agricultural journals,³⁷ and some of them were reprinted in *DeBow's Review* of New Orleans,³⁸ the major publication of its type and time. Cloud so approved of his colleague's contributions that on one occasion he declared: "It is *passing* strange that the *Peculiarities and Diseases of Negroes* are not made the subject of distinct and special consideration in a *single Southern college*. When we take even the most superficial survey of the advantages of such teachings, their necessity is so obvious as to render this long neg-

³⁵ *DeBow's Review*, XI, 64-69 (January, 1851), XI, 209-213 (August, 1851), XI, 331-336 (September, 1851), XI, 504-508 (November, 1851) contains a series of articles titled "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," written by Samuel A. Cartwright of New Orleans. Wilson might have copied his own title from Cartwright's. For the most part Cartwright discussed specific diseases, whereas Wilson was more concerned with generalities. Cartwright wrote on physiological differences of whites and blacks; pneumonia; bilious and adynamic fevers; scrofula; frambesia, pian or yaws; consumption; drapetomania, "or the Disease Causing Negroes to Run Away; Dysaesthesia Aethiopica, or Hebetude of Mind and Obtuse Sensibility of Body—a Disease Peculiar to Negroes—Called by Overseers 'Rascality.'"

³⁶ Publication of Cloud's journal was announced in 1852: "THE AMERICAN COTTON PLANTER.—Our old friend and correspondent, Dr. Cloud, is about establishing a paper with the above title, in Montgomery, Alabama.—It is to be devoted to the planting and manufacturing interests of the South, and will be issued as soon as a sufficient number of names are procured to warrant the undertaking. We wish the Doctor abundant success, and trust his paper will prove a valuable ally in the good cause" (*Southern Cultivator*, X, 185, June, 1852). The periodical began publication in 1853. *Ibid.*, XI, 114 (April, 1853) stated: "Dr. Cloud's new journal—has reached its third number, and may now be considered a 'fixed fact.' It is conducted with much talent and industry, and is well worthy of a liberal support." In January, 1857, Cloud assumed control of the *Soil of the South*, of Columbus, Georgia. From the latter date until its suspension in June, 1861, his magazine bore the title of *American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South*.

³⁷ On this point see Paul H. Johnstone, "Old Ideals versus New Ideas in Farm Life," 1940 *Yearbook of Agriculture* (Washington, 1941), p. 115.

³⁸ XXVIII, 597-599 (May, 1860), XXIX, 112-115 (July, 1860).

lect almost incredible." His solution of the problem was that some college, preferably the embryonic University of the South, should establish a "chair of Hygiene and Peculiarities, etc." This pertinent observation he made in June, 1860.³⁹

Wilson's articles in the *American Cotton Planter* came about in a most interesting manner. For several years in the 1850's he had been editor of the so-called "Health Department" of *Godey's Lady's Book* and for at least two years he was a corresponding editor of the *Savannah Journal of Medicine*.⁴⁰ His first published correspondence with Cloud began in the summer of 1858, when the following suggestive letter was written:⁴¹

In the April number of your excellent magazine, I am pleased to see that you have devoted several pages to extracts on 'Health and Sickness.' I have long thought that every newspaper, and especially every monthly intended for families and farmers, should have a 'Health Department' under the supervision of a competent physician. But this department should not be made up of a number of recipes to be used empirically according to the *name* of a disease, regardless of its stage, the attendant symptoms, and the actual condition of the patient. The great object should be to teach the best means of preventing sickness—the symptoms by which diseases may be distinguished in their incipency, while yet amenable to simple domestic remedies; and the principles on which medicines are to be administered should be regarded of primary importance. . . .⁴²

As a result, Cloud presumably invited Wilson to become a regular correspondent of the *Planter*, and in November, the

³⁹ *Planter*, IV 293-294 (June, 1860).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 49 (January, 1861).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, 225-226 (July, 1858).

⁴² The extracts mentioned by Wilson were reprinted from the *Valley Farmer* (Louisville, Kentucky). Discussed therein were: preservation of health; provision for sickness; nursing the sick; remedies for apoplexy, bites or stings of venomous insects, burns or scalds, boils, risings, inflamed breasts, cholera morbus, drowning, fainting, bite of mad dogs, venomous serpents, poisons, toothache, earache, sore throat, croup and blisters; poultices; emetics; and a diet for the sick, including gruel, porridge, ponado and broth (*ibid.*, II, 127, April, 1858).

latter began a series "on some of the more important prominent characteristics of the negro race. . . ." Whether this choice of subject was Wilson's or Cloud's is unknown, but in his first article, called "The Negro—His Bodily Characteristics," Wilson emphasized that slaves differed from whites in their "woolly head, the black skin, and shorter thicker muscles, and the longer sinews, . . . [and] with regard to the brain. . . ."43 The colored man's chest, he added, was "less expanded than that of the white man, and consequently . . . his breathing capacity is less . . . and therefore [his] vital resistance and recovering or recuperative energies are comparatively feeble."⁴⁴

Wilson's next two articles appeared under the title, "The Negro—His Mental and Moral Peculiarities," wherein it was suggested that slaves were more animal-like in their nature because of a lower type brain. Showing little evidence of the intellectual in development and attitude, they were thus "debased" in moral sentiments.⁴⁵ Wilson also contended that, because their skin threw off heat rapidly, they were remarkably adaptable to warm climates: "*if Southern planters would guard against the most serious losses in sickness and death of their slaves, they should diligently regard the defective heat-producing powers of the negro, . . . and endeavor to compensate for it by providing him with comfortable houses and a suitable supply of food and clothing.*"⁴⁶ This

43 "Physical Character of the Negro," *DeBow's Review*, IX, 231 (August, 1850), also describes Negro hair as "wool" and refers to the Negro as a "separate species of beings, . . ." See also *ibid.*, IX, 243 (August, 1850).

44 *Planter*, II, 355 (November, 1858). A report was circulated from Africa in the 1830's that the Negro's stomach differed in size and texture from whites; they also possessed "thick craniums" and longer spines. "That they are a distinct race I think is evident from these and other peculiarities" (*Farmers' Register*, I, 665, April, 1834).

45 *Planter*, III, 67-68 (February, 1859).

46 This conception concerning "heat-producing powers of the negro" was well established by the time Wilson wrote his articles. A writer signing himself "FRANKLIN" concluded many years earlier that Negroes of the southern states were "less liable to autumnal diseases than the whites, yet suffer *much more*

striking suggestion also was offered: "There can be but little doubt that the dreadful typhoid fever, which has of late been so destructive on some plantations, owes its origin largely to the accumulated filth of years about negro cabins; for negroes, like hogs, are not remarkably cleanly."⁴⁷

These intriguing observations were followed in June, 1859, by "The Negro—His Diet, Clothing etc." Pork and corn, because of their heat producing qualities, were here described as "the most valuable of all foods for Negroes." Vegetables were described as scurvy-preventatives. Food should be well prepared by a cook "under the supervision of a mistress." As for clothing, presumably in the Lower South, Negroes should wear cotton garments from April to November and woolen garments the remainder of the year. India rubber overcoats, or raincoats, "might also pay well both in time and health,"⁴⁸ Wilson added. His opinions were obviously agreeable to the doctor-editor, for, in the June, 1859, issue of his journal he stated, ". . . there is no man better qualified than Dr. Wilson for this task," adding that Wilson was preparing a book to be entitled "A Home Book for Women."⁴⁹

severely from winter epidemics than they do . . . *white* and *polished* surfaces let off heat slowly; whereas *black* or *rough* surfaces, radiate it freely. This is an admitted fact in chemistry and physiology. We know that liquids cool soonest in *dark* vessels, and retain their heat longest in bright ones. . . . The negro . . . was designed for the sultry regions of the torrid zone. His surface is therefore adapted to the ready escapement of internal heat. . . . How can the health of slaves be best preserved? We see that if they had a white skin, it would prove a security to them: . . . They ought in the first place, to wear *woolens* next to their skin, instead of linen and cotton. Long woolen shirts would retain their heat, equalize the excitement, and secure them against the effects of wet work and rainy weather. . . . When wet, negroes should dry by a good fire. They should also be allowed to sleep by a fire, if convenient: the *out* laborers especially" (*American Farmer*, II, 242, October 27, 1820). A portion of this article was reprinted in *Farmers' Register*, VII, 372 (June 30, 1839).

⁴⁷ *Planter*, III, 93 (March, 1859).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 197-198 (June, 1859). The opinion that many Negroes themselves failed to protect their health is advanced in a "prize-winning essay" written by a Virginian in the early 1830's (*Virginia Farmer*, reprinted in *American Farmer*, XV, 138-141, July 12, 1833).

⁴⁹ The correct title of this book is *Woman's Home Book of Health, a Work for*

"The Negro—His Peculiarities as to Disease" was Wilson's next offering.⁵⁰ In this he declared that slaves lived long because their owners sheltered them against many vices in which white men indulged.⁵¹ Since slaves had "no regrets for the past, and no anxieties about the future," they were mentally prepared for enjoyment of good health. But unfortunately for their health's sake they were exposed to bad weather while performing their jobs and they often over-indulged in the use of tobacco. Possessing filthy habits, they should bathe every Saturday night and don clean clothes for Sunday. They should not be purged or bled immoderately because they did "not bear active treatment so well" as whites. This was true despite their outward appearance of strength: "The fact is, excessive physicing is a very common error in domestic practice, both among whites and negroes, and thousands are thus hurried to their grave annually."⁵²

In the October, 1859, issue of the *Planter* Cloud published

Mothers and for Families on a Plan, New, Safe, and Efficient, Showing, in Plain Language, How Disease May Be Prevented and Cured without the Use of Dangerous Remedies (Philadelphia, 1860).

⁵⁰ *Planter*, III, 228-229 (July, 1859). Discussions of the Negro's partial immunity to yellow fever and his susceptibility to chills, colds and periodic fevers may be found in *DeBow's Review*, XVII, 39-42 (July, 1854), XX, 612-622 (May, 1856) and *Southern Cultivator*, XIX, 18 (January, 1861).

⁵¹ In 1851 Samuel A. Cartwright, a leading doctor of New Orleans, claimed: "... negroes, who have masters to take care of them, are as healthy in the South as any people in the world . . ." (*DeBow's Review*, XI, 196, August, 1851). See also *ibid.*, XIX, 121-122 (July, 1855). George A. Ketchum, an outstanding Mobile physician, concluded: "The colored population exceed the whites in longevity" (*ibid.*, XI, 530, November, 1851). See Charles S. Sydnor, "Life Span of Mississippi Slaves," *American Historical Review*, XXXV, 573 (April, 1930), for a modern historian's conclusion after a study of longevity of slaves in Mississippi: "the expectation of life of the slave was but little short of that of his master."

⁵² P. C. Weston, owner of a rice plantation in South Carolina, in setting up a list of rules for his overseer's management of slaves, ordered: "Bleeding is under all circumstances strictly prohibited, except by order of the Doctor. The overseer is particularly warned not to give strong medicine, such as calomel, or tartar emetic; simple remedies such as flax-seed tea, mintwater, No. 6, magnesia, etc., are sufficient for most cases, and do less harm" (*DeBow's Review*, XXII, 41, January, 1857).

a most significant letter concerning Wilson's writings, one that serves as a focal point in this presentation of ante-bellum plantation medicine. It was written by G. D. Harmon, of Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. After praising his articles on Negro health, Harmon inquired if Wilson would consider writing "a book on the diseases of negroes and the treatment thereof." Harmon emphasized that "such a book would supply a great necessity, which has long been felt by every manager of the negro in the South. Such a book, written by a Southern raised, and Southern educated man—a man who has not only studied medicine but practiced it on the plantations of the cotton growing districts of the South, would be invaluable. Let the want be supplied."⁵³

Immediately, Wilson wrote to Cloud: "I agree fully with your correspondent that a book for planters, on these subjects is much needed." It should be prepared by a Southerner, experienced with treating ailing Negroes. The book "should be a plain practical and common sense one, free from all speculative disquisitions and all medical technicalities—in short, a work that any man of ordinary intelligence could understand, and that would serve as a safe guide in the domestic treatment of negroes." Indeed, Wilson was ready to write such a book, if 500 persons agreed to purchase it at \$2 per copy. He had practiced medicine "on the plantations of the cotton growing districts of the South" for fifteen years and he believed that a book on Negro medicine was needed and that he was capable of writing it.⁵⁴ Editor Cloud boosted him at the same time: "Dr. J. S. Wilson . . . is widely known as the correspondent in the Health Department of Godey's Lady's Book . . . [and] is an intelligent practical man, engaged in the practice of medicine in the country near Columbus, Georgia. . . ."⁵⁵

⁵³ *Planter*, III, 311 (October, 1859).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 356 (November, 1859).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 358 (November, 1859).

A month later, in December, 1859, Harmon wrote another letter to Cloud:

I am glad to learn, as I do from your November number, that Dr. John S. Wilson, of Columbus, Ga., has agreed to write a book on the Diseases of Negroes, etc., for the purpose of planters and managers of negroes, providing they will sustain him.

That every planter in the South will coincide with me in the opinion that such a work is needed, I have no question. And I have so much confidence in the intelligence of the readers of your magazine, that I am certain that one thousand of them will take a copy of the work, and furnish their names to Dr. Wilson at once, so that he may enter into his mission without delay. I propose to be one of one hundred of your readers who will furnish Dr. Wilson ten reputable names between this and the 1st of January.

I spoke to four gentlemen to-day on the subject, and they all gave me their names at once. Let us all take an interest in this matter.⁵⁶ Harmon's letter was again prefaced with an endorsement by Cloud: "We hope the number of names will be speedily made up, which will render certain the forthcoming of Dr. Wilson's book."

With such encouragement Wilson continued to write his articles on Negro medicine. They appeared in the *Planter* throughout 1860, all under the caption of "The Peculiarities and Diseases of Negroes." Each treated only one or two phases of the subject. In January he reviewed his previous articles, pointing up particular Negro traits, such as anatomical or bodily, physiological or functional, and mental and moral. No noteworthy new approaches were added to his earlier discussions, however.⁵⁷

Beginning with February, 1860, he began to discuss sup-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 383 (December, 1859). This letter and others quoted previously, along with Wilson's willingness to carry out Harmon's suggestion, as well as Cloud's endorsement of the entire project, proves beyond question that all concerned believe that the South needed a suitable and practical study of medicine for Negroes. Is it likely that two such widely experienced physician-writers as Wilson and Cloud could have been unaware of a book on Negro medicine if it had existed?

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 46-47 (January, 1860).

plementary subjects at length. Writing on "Proper Construction of Houses, Building Sites, etc.," he advocated open fireplaces in slave houses,⁵⁸ recommending that openings be put near the top "where impurities naturally tend to escape. . . ." Buildings should rest close to but not directly on the ground. They ought to be located on fertile soil and surrounded by vegetation, the latter of which could absorb "poisonous exhalations and exert a protective influence." The sun flower was recommended as a proper and suitable vegetation.⁵⁹ Decaying vegetable matter near cabins should never be permitted, on the other hand, for it was "a prolific cause of disease."

In "Diet and Clothing," printed in March, 1860, Wilson reiterated his remarks of June, 1859, on the subject.⁶⁰ Although the Negro possessed "feeble heat generating powers," he should by no means "be considered merely as a *walking furnace*, for the consumption of fuel in the form of food." It was best to feed him on fat bacon, pork, corn, and peas because such "carbonaceous" foods generated heat. Molasses and sugar were also excellent for him. Fruits, if properly selected, were highly recommended, but orchards ought to be off-bounds to Negroes because they gorged themselves when such edibles were not rationed. Individual slave families should not be allowed to prepare their own meals; food should rather "be cooked either by the cook for the white

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 79-80 (February, 1860). Excellent discussions of actual housing conditions, as well as planters' concern with hygienic problems, on southern plantations may be found in the *Farmers' Register*, II, 703 (April, 1835), III, 114-116 (June, 1836), V, 32-33 (May, 1837); *Farmer and Gardener*, II, 170-172 (September 29, 1835); *DeBow's Review*, X, 623 (June, 1851); *Southern Cultivator*, X, 227 (August 1852), XII, 205 (July, 1854), XV, 170-171 (June, 1857).

⁵⁹ In 1858 an unidentified planter of Barbour county, Alabama, planted a peck of sun flower seed around his Negro cabins to prevent chills and fevers. He reported later: "so far not a case has occurred among my field hands, or negro children that stay at the quarter" (*Planter*, II, 341, November, 1858).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 126-128 (March, 1860). See also *Farmers' Register*, II, 703 (April, 1835), IV, 494-495 (December, 1836).

family, or by some other woman."⁶¹ As for clothing, it was strongly recommended that overcoats or capots be used to prevent wetness and colds and that these protective garments be worn especially early in the mornings. Water proof coverings, made of India rubber, were again advised.⁶²

In "Cleanliness in Negroes,"⁶³ one of his most droll articles, Wilson began with the proclamation: "so notoriously filthy are negroes that many persons will doubtless smile at the very mention of cleanliness when used in connection with a people so closely allied to *hogs* in their nature and habits." He maintained that Negroes had a natural dislike of soap and water, but added that this attitude was due largely to their circumstances and occupations "and to the indifference of masters in this particular." Dirt closed pores of the skin and if not removed could become extremely injurious to the body. To encourage cleanliness among the slaves, masters should allow ample time for them to wash, mend, and attend to "all such family and personal affairs." Interestingly enough, Wilson stated that it was impracticable for Negroes to bathe daily—"daily baths are unnecessary." Reaffirming an earlier opinion, he concluded that a Saturday bath and clean Sunday clothes were sufficient in these respects. "Cleanliness in Negro Houses" he also considered of special importance.⁶⁴ Houses should be elevated "so that a current of pure

⁶¹ Writing of the Negro's partial immunity to malaria, in 1831, a South Carolina doctor stated: "There can be no doubt that we live much too gross for the climate. Look at the negroes how-healthy they comparatively are, and when taken sick how much milder their disease than the whites. Something of this may be ascribed to particular temperament and constitutional insusceptibility to malaria, but these, I think, greatly depend upon the diet and habits of the individuals from infancy. In confirmation of this we find negroes who live in the city and partake of its luxuries, suffer equally with the whites when exposed to the country air" (*Southern Agriculturist*, IV, 472, September, 1831).

⁶² For a description by Ralph Butterfield, a Mississippi planter, of the importance of food, clothing, housing and medical care for slaves, see *Planter*, II, 293-294 (September, 1858) and *DeBow's Review*, XXV, 571-572 (November, 1858).

⁶³ *Planter*, IV, 173-176 (April, 1860).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 222 (May, 1860). See also *Farmers' Register*, IV, 494 (December 1, 1836).

air can pass freely beneath. . . ." One good raking around the cabins should be required each year. Cabin walls ought to be whitewashed in order to cut down on cholera and dysentery.⁶⁵

A short statement on "Working Negroes," made in May, 1860, is noteworthy. It was Wilson's professional opinion that slaves should not be overworked because of the danger of shortening their lives. He claimed "*that the natural stamina, the vital resistance, the enduring and recovering powers of the negro are inferior to those of the white man.*" "Rest for Negroes" was considered most significant. Because of their weaker resistance they should not be worked excessively at night. If southern planters overworked their charges or failed to allow them enough time to rest sufficiently, "they must expect to suffer loss in the sickness and premature decrepitude of their slaves." Lights on the plantation should be put out at nine o'clock and no hard work ought to be performed on Sundays.⁶⁶ Further suggestions of a related nature were included in an article on "Sleeping Arrangements for Negroes."⁶⁷ Some slaves were forced to sleep on benches or floors and therefore could not rest properly at night. Others were issued inadequate bed covers for their use, whereas they should have "an abundant supply of warm, all-wool blankets." Cotton mattresses and blankets were also recommended: "And what an impetus it would give to King Cotton, if . . . the fleecy down of our cotton fields were made

⁶⁵ Robert J. Draughton believed: "One of the most prolific sources of disease among negroes, is the condition of their houses, and the manner in which they live. Small, low, tight and filthy, their houses can be but laboratories of disease: . . ." (*Southern Cultivator*, VIII, 66, May, 1850).

⁶⁶ *Planter*, IV, 223 (May, 1860). In May, 1860, G. D. Harmon, who had suggested that Wilson prepare a book on Negro medicine, wrote again to Cloud plugging the idea of such a book: "It is useless for me to say that such a work is needed upon every plantation in the cotton growing country, for every one who has had any experience on the subject has felt, and does feel that such is the case" (*ibid.*, IV, 218-219, May, 1860).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 270-272 (June, 1860).

our resting place, as well as our covering.”⁶⁸ Writing later on the subject of bed cover, Wilson added: “During a residence of several years in the lower part of Alabama, we found that there were few nights sufficiently warm to render cover uncomfortable; . . .”⁶⁹

“Amusements for Negroes” and similar features of Negro plantation life also attracted Wilson’s attention. Slaves should be permitted to participate in music and singing, jubilees on holidays, corn-shuckings and other such pastimes “in which negroes may be safely indulged that will add much to their enjoyment and thus tend to promote health.”⁷⁰ Possessing a “natural fondness for alcoholic liquors,” however, the Negro should be allowed strong drinks only for treatment of “acute attacks of disease.” Even tea and coffee were suspect. They were “more or less injurious in all cases when used habitually by healthy persons; . . . they are allowable with negroes only on account of these constitutional peculiarities which render them less susceptible to the deleterious effects of such drinks.” These intriguing comments were the chief contents of a short article titled “Drinks for Negroes.”⁷¹

In discussing “Matrimonial Alliances of Negroes,” Wilson suggested that slave marriage relations could be magnified and made more binding by a religious ceremony.⁷² This was advisable because “from natural fickleness, from that strength of passion always dominant in inferior animal nature, and from the circumstances by which they were surrounded, negroes are very prone to violate their marriage obligations, and thus they are exposed to all the evils that are likely to

⁶⁸ This idea of using cotton blankets was an old one. Such blankets were in use in the 1830’s on the South Carolina plantation of Henry Ravenel; and it was reported: “the negroes are remarkably healthy” (*Southern Agriculturist*, IV, 360-369, July, 1831).

⁶⁹ *Planter*, IV, 319-320 (July, 1860).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 366-368 (August, 1860).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 510-512 (November, 1860).

⁷² *Ibid.*, IV, 415-416 (September, 1860).

ensue from roving licentiousness." Adultery should be punished.⁷³ "Family Ties and Connections" were described as being "intimately associated with his happiness." If respected by masters, family affections would "promote the happiness of their negroes, and consequently their health— . . ." Slaves should be segregated into families, with individual cabins and garden patches for their personal use. Families should not be separated.⁷⁴ Under the caption of "Social Relations," the following advice on plantation management was offered: "The *pater-familias*, or head of the family, should, in one sense, be the father of the whole concern, negroes and all. And while he allows no undue familiarity and companionship on the part of the latter, they should be convinced that he cares for them—that master is their best friend, and that he will, to the best of his ability, redress all grievances, settle their disputes on equitable principles; and protect them from all wrong whatever quarter it may come." On every plantation there should be established "a code of laws, . . ."

Wilson's last contribution on "The Peculiarities and Diseases of Negroes" in the *Planter* consisted of two parts:⁷⁵ "Clothing of Negro Children" and "Peculiarities of Mulattoes." Improper clothing of children brought on chills and fevers and particularly caused congestions, inflammations and bowel complaints, the doctor declared.⁷⁶ The Mulatto

⁷³ One unidentified southern planter, in setting up rules for his establishment, ordered: "Marriages shall be performed in every instance of a nuptial contract, and the parties settled off to themselves without incumbering other houses, to give discontent. No slave shall be allowed to cohabit with two or more wives or husbands at the same time, [to] do so shall subject them to a *strict* trial and severe punishment" (*Southern Agriculturist*, III, 239, May, 1830). See also Weymouth T. Jordan, "The Management Rules of an Alabama Black Belt Plantation, 1848-1862," *Agricultural History*, XVIII, 53-64 (January, 1944).

⁷⁴ *Planter*, IV, 463-464 (October, 1860).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 557-560 (December, 1860).

⁷⁶ A person signing himself "Demijohn, Montgomery Co., Ala., August, 1849," wrote as follows on medical treatment of slave children: "Diarrhoea frequently visits us as an epidemic. When it first makes its appearance on a plantation its

were considered superior to the full-blooded Negro because they assumed many characteristics of whites, but they did not live as long.⁷⁷ It was concluded that "the jet black, shiny, unadulterated, greasy-skinned, *strong-smelling* negro is the best every way, after he has been in the country long enough to undergo proper training, and get rid of some of his native African notions."

This last article was closed with an announcement of Wilson's forthcoming book, "The Plantation and Family Physician." It would contain between 500 and 600 pages, had already "been forwarded for publication," and would be supplied as soon as it came from the press. As expressed by Wilson, his book was more thorough and complete than the "imperfect and hastily written articles" which had appeared in the *American Cotton Planter*.

No matter how hurriedly Wilson prepared his articles it is apparent that he possessed a vast practical knowledge of social and economic phases of plantation life. They were intended for every-day use, although they of course do not discuss specific cures of ailments and diseases. Written late, they obviously did not long serve their intended purposes. But for their information on management of plantation slaves alone they are worthy of notice. Undoubtedly, they resulted from an extended study and practice of medicine. They quite definitely presented the considered opinion of a large portion of the southern medical profession; and it is

progress may be affectually arrested by the use of the sweet potato. This esculent is, par excellence, the thing for negro children. When it is much used, the two diseases, which sweep off more young negroes than all others—Worms and Diarrhoea—are rarely ever known" (*Southern Cultivator*, VII, 135, September, 1849). See also the *Farmers' Register*, IV, 495 (December, 1836), for a reprint of an article on "Little Negroes" copied from an unknown issue of the *Southern Agriculturist*.

⁷⁷ Before the Civil War southerners generally believed that Negroes were less susceptible to yellow fever; mulattoes were affected progressively in proportion to their white blood; whites were considered most susceptible (*DeBow's Review*, XX, 612-622, May, 1856).

obvious that Wilson borrowed heavily from predecessors who had written on the same topic. He was by no means consistently scientific in his approach, surely not in the modern sense, but he did put into writing certain ideas and conceptions that his reading audience, southern agriculturists and others, wished to see. He was a product of his section and period. As is well-known, the institution of slavery exerted a continuing and most powerful influence on the thinking of pre-Civil War southerners, doctors included. Moreover, hindsight permits the conclusion that Wilson's scientific presentation of his subject suffered accordingly. However that may be, his projected book failed to reach print and his articles thus represent his chief contributions on Negro medicine in the Old South. In volume, at least, and in content in some instances, his articles may also be regarded as one of the most significant series of essays of their type written in the ante-bellum period.

William Phineas Browne, Business Man and Pioneer Mine Operator of Alabama [Part I]

By VIRGINIA KNAPP

IN 1831 WILLIAM PHINEAS BROWNE, a twenty-seven-year-old Vermont attorney,¹ arrived in North Alabama to join his cousin, John B. Ives, in a construction venture which involved the cutting of a boat canal fourteen miles long and sixty feet wide around fabulous Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River.² After but five months' work, however, and because of discontent and lack of labor, the partners sold their share in the \$300,000 contract and moved to New Orleans to undertake another and larger project, a waterway between the American Quarter and Lake Pontchartrain at Bayou St. John.³

Although Browne's main interest in the Louisiana city was, of course, the canal, he became involved in other business,

¹ This article, which depends almost wholly upon unpublished correspondence and other miscellany in the William Phineas Browne Papers in the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, is a condensation of a Master's thesis written (1948) at the University of Texas under the direction of Professor Barnes F. Lathrop.

² *U. S. Executive Documents*, 24 Cong., 2 Sess., House Document No. 121 (Washington, 1837), and Safford Berney, *Handbook of Alabama* (Mobile, 1878), pp. 107-109.

³ Ives to Browne, New Orleans, March 21, 1832; James Villa, N. Y., October 21, 22, 1833; Ives to J. Ogden, New Orleans, March 23, 1834; Ogden to Browne and Ives, Canal Project [La.], January 9, 1834; Browne to Ogden, New Orleans, November 8, 1834; F. A. Smart to Ives, New York, January 13, February 1, 22, 1834; Ives and Browne "Account Book," October, 1833-January, 1834; "Memorandum of Proposition to Canal Commissioners, January 8, 1834;" and Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Towpaths, the Story of the American Canal Era* (New York, 1927), pp. 290-291.

and hard work plus the recurrence of a fever he had earlier contracted soon caused his general ill health. From late 1833 to the middle of 1834 Browne was a sick man. Meanwhile, an old friend from Vermont, William Edmund, had come to Portersville, Alabama, to enter business with his uncle, Edwin Porter, and Browne, in hopes that the sea voyages would benefit his health, made several trips back and forth from New Orleans to Mobile.⁴ While in the Alabama city Browne became interested in Porter's enterprises, including a small steamship company which carried United States mail, passengers and freight between Mobile and New Orleans. Within a short time Browne became captain of the steamer, *Star of the West*,⁵ and, since he had found his health much better in Mobile and at sea than he had in New Orleans, he wrote his cousin Ives, inviting him to buy his share in the Lake Pontchartrain contract. Frankly he stated that he desired to invest the money in Porter's businesses at Portersville, Cedar Point, and Mobile.⁶ Ives, displeased, finally (in May, 1834) bought Browne's interest for \$14,500.⁷

Just how much Browne invested in the Porter's mail steamer business is unknown, but the company began to suffer many setbacks: the ship *Yazoo* was wrecked and the *Star of the West* exploded. In addition, the *Long Branch* had serious engine trouble, leaving the *Watchman* the only ship fit to make the trips. Porter, meanwhile, had ordered built at Baltimore a new ship to be called the *Creole*, but, since he was unable to pay \$25,000 for construction and fitting, the builders would not release her. As a result either the *Star of*

⁴ Some time in the 1850's Browne wrote an "Autobiographical Sketch," from which these personal facts, as well as others cited, were obtained.

⁵ Edmund to Browne, Portersville, Ala., November 6, 1832; January 28, April 6, 1834.

⁶ Browne to Ives, Cedar Point, Ala., April 16, 1834.

⁷ Ives to Browne, New Orleans, April 22, May ?, 1834. Ives wrote on the safety of canal construction by comparing it with shipping and added, "I hope you will be careful of explosions on those d—d old boats."

the West or the *Long Branch* had to be repaired to continue service. Edmund suggested that they repair the *Long Branch*,⁸ but Porter, on the other hand, thought it advisable to purchase another steamer, the *Atlas*, for which the owner wanted \$3,500.⁹ During these negotiations the *Watchman* carried on alone until her Captain William Flame was held in New Orleans on a claim against her by a small craft owner who had been "run over" by the larger boat.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the United States mail contract was due to expire June 30, 1834, and Porter went to Washington late in May to try to renew it and to secure a loan either in Baltimore or New York in order to obtain the *Creole*. The Postmaster General proposed a contract of \$60,000 for a daily run to New Orleans or a three-times-a-week schedule for \$25,000. Porter favored the latter plan, but congressmen from Alabama and Louisiana protested vigorously against reducing the number of trips. The Postmaster General then told Porter he would not make the contract announcement until "after the rising of the Congress."¹¹

Back in New Orleans Browne tried to keep the mail going. He had the *Long Branch* repaired and once more in operation, but he and Edmund waited anxiously for some early news of the coming of the *Creole*, each day scanning the mail and the Baltimore newspapers for news of the ship.¹² On July 25, 1834, Porter wrote to Browne that he had failed to secure a loan in New York. He refused to give up, however, so he asked that Edmund be put on board the *Watchman* and that the boat make three trips a week.¹³ Immediately Browne and

⁸ Edmund to Browne, New Orleans, April 24, 25, 28, 1834.

⁹ Porter to Browne, Portersville, May 5, 1834. Porter offered to put up his Negro slaves as security for the loan.

¹⁰ Flame to Edwin Porter, New Orleans, May 22, 1834.

¹¹ Porter to Browne, Washington, D. C., May 25, June 23, 28, 1834.

¹² Captain Sam Thruston to Browne, Mobile, July 2, 1834; Edmund to Browne, Mobile, July 8, 9, 14, 1834.

¹³ Porter to Browne, Washington, July 25, 1834.

Edmund began the run. Edmund sold his furniture to the *Watchman* for fuel; he paid off all hands and made the run with the help of a few Negroes.¹⁴ But their efforts were in vain. Porter failed to raise a loan in New York or Baltimore and, consequently, he wanted to sell out the business. He sent an agent to represent him and to close the concern and balance the books, instructing Browne to notify him when the line had begun the three-day run so that he could settle with the Post Office Department.¹⁵ Since there were a number of judgments against the company, it took Porter's agent almost a year to complete the sale and settlement of the property, most of which was sold to Judge Henry Hitchcock of Mobile. The last accounting, dated December, 1835, revealed that Browne had received \$7,024 in the transaction, but whether this represented a profit or less is unknown.¹⁶

Browne, undaunted by the collapse of the steamship business, immediately invested \$7,000 in a general merchandise store in the little town of Liverpool on the Yazoo River in Mississippi. Operated by a hired manager, the store did not prosper. In the period of Browne's ownership, a little more than a year, it cleared only a few hundred dollars.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Browne had earned the friendship of Judge Hitchcock, a wealthy lawyer and former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama,¹⁸ and after 1835 the two men bought and sold real estate as partners and individually. On May 30, 1836, Browne purchased the Commercial Hotel (Mobile) from Hitchcock for \$4,000, and in November a tenement house on Water Street for \$4,500. Three months

¹⁴ Edmund to Browne, Mobile, July 30, August 8, 1834.

¹⁵ Porter to Browne, Washington, November 2, December 3, 1834.

¹⁶ William Beldon to Browne, Mobile, February 17, 24, April 2, 5, December 28, 1835.

¹⁷ Jasper Powlis to Browne, Liverpool, Mississippi, June 10, July 2, September 25, October 8, 25, 1835, February 12, 20, July 25, 1836.

¹⁸ Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, III, 816 (Chicago, 1921.)

later he contracted to buy for \$76,800 a large section of land in the Hallett Division, including the Mobile Iron Factory, a saw mill, and several small stores, but for an unknown reason the deal never materialized, and the deeds and notes were canceled.¹⁹

During the year 1836 Browne was involved in many enterprises. He was living in the Commercial Hotel, but for reasons unknown still maintained lodgings in New Orleans. Apparently, for the first time his finances enabled him to live in luxury and he indulged in fancy clothes, silverware, books, French liqueurs and fine wines.²⁰ In his "Autobiographical Sketch" he wrote that he was, in January, 1837, worth by every estimate that could be made based upon the current value of my property over \$200,000. But the revulsions of the following spring and the never-ending depression of property and the loss of a very large amount through defective titles, brought me in the end to the verge of bankruptcy.

At this this time Browne was also involved in a number of speculations in currency, but it is impossible to judge from the manuscript records the amount of his wealth in comparison with his own estimate. "I am indeed happy to hear of your prosperity," wrote his old friend, Porter, in 1837. "You may best be careful for you may suffer from the present administration's views of currency."²¹

The rapid economic changes of 1837 reflect noticeably in the correspondence of Browne, however. Letter after letter appeared dunning him for various unpaid accounts, including those for many of the luxuries he had bought in New Orleans.²² For a year or so his debtors continued to plague him. To meet some of these demands for cash, Brown sold

¹⁹ Deeds to Commercial Hotel, May 30, and "Tenement Property," November 1, 1836, and to Hallett Division of False Estate," February 15, 1837.

²⁰ William S. Morton to Browne, New Orleans, May 9, November 16, 18, 1836.

²¹ Porter to Browne, Washington, January 7, 1837.

²² Hotchkiss & Company to Browne, New Orleans, January 4, 1837; May 15, July 12, October 3, 1838.

a number of his slaves and borrowed money from Hitchcock and other friends.²³ By leasing his hotel property for a year and by trying to make other holdings profitable, Browne struggled against further losses.²⁴ He and Hitchcock began building a cotton press in June, 1839, and soon thereafter went into the cypress lumber business on land they owned jointly in central Alabama. In order to examine other presses and engines, Hitchcock sent Browne to Albany, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.²⁵ Then the final blow fell—Hitchcock died rather suddenly in December, 1839,²⁶ and Browne's holdings were tied up in the Hitchcock estate, which was entangled with the Bank of the United States, and Browne's fortune was lost.²⁷ And so, at the age of thirty-five the young Vermonter who had risen from poverty to wealth in the Deep South found himself virtually without means, his canal, steamship and real estate holdings swallowed up by the misfortunes of the times.

Between 1840 and 1850 Browne's interests shifted as he struggled to recover from his financial losses. For a time he practiced law. Then he erected a small corn mill, which he called a "picayunne enterprise," in spite of the fact that it made about \$1,200 for him in eight months. Aided by a nephew, he made his corn milling more profitable by building a larger mill, and his unscorched meal became so popular as to suggest that he expand his trade to the West Indies. Always a promoter, he wanted to sell salt at the same time. Consequently, he leased space on the city wharves at Mobile in November, 1844, for one year at \$3,750, and paid the sum in six installments. Thus, by means of his milling business

²³ Browne to Henry Goldwaite, Mobile, July 20, 1837. The mortgage to Hitchcock signed by Browne, July 2, 1838, was canceled.

²⁴ Lease of Commercial Hotel by Browne to Franklin G. Brown, Mobile, November, 1837.

²⁵ Memorandum to Browne from Hitchcock, July 1, 1839.

²⁶ Browne to Stubbin Company [of New York], Mobile, December 28, 1839.

²⁷ E. A. Hitchcock [Henry's brother] to Browne, New York, April 18, 1840.

and his law practice, Browne began to regain his fortune.²⁸

In 1845 Browne was a candidate on the winning Democratic ticket for the House of Representatives from the Mobile District. While a member of the legislature, he tried to secure the removal of the capital from Tuscaloosa to Mobile, and to amend the Mobile City charter in order to tax the property of people in trades and professions, thereby equalizing the support of city government. He also vigorously opposed the State Bank plan.²⁹ Otherwise and upon many occasions Browne demonstrated his ingenious faculty for interpreting human nature. His position in the legislature afforded an excellent opportunity for character study, and he kept careful notes of his opinions of most of the members of the House, listing them by counties—twenty-four Whigs and seven Democrats. These notes written without any desire for publication (and given in part below), are revealingly frank and of much value as thumbnail sketches of Browne's legislative contemporaries in the mid-1840's:

Butler County—[Thomas N.] Watts—anti-tariff and anti-distribution Whig—a clever young lawyer and wears spectacles.

Chambers County—[Daniel S.] Robertson—is a lawyer of good abilities.

Cherokee County—[William] Garrett—belongs to the chivalry,³⁰ is a good fellow, rather bashful, awkward and sensitive, and is influenced by John Clements.

Coosa County—[Howell] Rose—Rose is corrupt and cunning in his ways, talented; has much influence in the house—He is dogmatic and dictatorial, overbearing and vindictive and ready for any kind of bargain to accomplish his purpose, but will not compromise his party. He has control of Powell [his colleague from Coosa.]

²⁸ Ives to Browne, New Orleans, July 2, 21, 24, 1844, January 8, 1845; "Lease of City Wharves" from Hunter and Dunn, November 7, 1842; and Chester Browne to Browne, Boston, May 13, 1844.

²⁹ Browne to William F. Samford, Montevallo, January 21, 1857; Tuscaloosa, December 11, 1845.

³⁰ The Whigs called States Rights Democrats "Chivalry." See Lewis Dorman, *Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 to 1861* (Montgomery, 1935) p. 29.

Greene County—Dr. [Pleasant W.] Kittrell and [Joseph W.] Taylor—Whigs. Dr. K. is a good humane, clever man—a great talker and vain. Taylor is a son of Ward Taylor, a young lawyer, talented.

Henry County—[Richard] McGriff is a clever fellow and easily captivated by a little attention. The same description will answer for Williams.

Jackson County—[Williams R. W.] Cobb is a vain and desperate for poor men.

Lawrence County—[David] Hubbard is a man much misunderstood—He is a visionary and an enthusiastic. He is cunning from excess of cowardice and caution. He will never dig up a snake unless he is prepared to kill it. He is nevertheless a sincere man—has much vanity and likes attention.

Lowndes County—Dr. [Edward H.] Cook is a protestant Methodist—says nothing and does ditto: a man of good judgment and bitter prejudices. Judge [Cook's colleague] is a young lawyer of modest pretensions.

Marengo County—[Amos R.] Manning is a man of more talent than any man in the house—is modest and unassuming but not well calculated to please.

• •

Monroe County—[Aaron B.] Cooper—a man of great pretensions, a good lawyer, looks at small things with a microscope, and tumbles over big ones without seeing them at all—He is a man of mild and gentlemanly manners—but obstinate nevertheless and likely to be troublesome by jumping on the presenter and local measures of members. Seeing bugabears in anything that he has not even consulted about or does not fully comprehend in all details.

Montgomery County—Judge [Ben S.] Bibb is gentlemanly honorable and dignified and a brother to the late Gov. Bibb. His appearance is anything and his mind [sic] Dr. Billingsley [Bibb's colleague] is a man of good sense and judgment.

Marion County—[Woodson] Northcutt—anti-tariff, his prevailing weakness is enmity to the Brandons of Madison and to all who are friendly with them—one of the B's killed a brother of his—N. is as base as Julius Caesar.

Morgan County—[Green P.] Rice and [Aaron] Perry [Jr.]—Terry Hunkers—Rice is excessively vain—was once president of the senate—has long ears, his great hobby, familiarity with the rules of the

house, and the "gentleman from Morgan" is much flattered by being referred to on points of order, etc.

Perry County—[A. B.] Moore is a clever fellow but scary, has a good opinion of himself and is on the fence between the Hunkers and the Chivalry—was Speaker of the House last year, had a fight with Garrett and [*sic*] are probably enemies.

Pike County—[Harrell] Hobdy—is a planter of small caliber, controlled in all his acts and opinions by Fitzpatrick.

Sumter County—Dr. [William S.] Patton—[Sam W.] Inge—[Thomas] Woodward—all supposed to belong to chivalry. Dr. P. is said to be a man of considerable abilities—Inge is a young lawyer, a nephew of William Murphy, the Whig elector that couldn't be. He is a man of very good talent but without application; goes for the usages of the party up to the hub. Woodward is a Baptist clergyman and thinks himself honest and is about as honest as old Rose.

Talladega County [John] Hill and [Franklin W.] Bowden—Hunkers or chivalry according to circumstances. Bowden is a noisy clamorous Democrat and in 1840 was a more noisy and clamorous Whig. He thinks himself a man of great abilities and is a man of fair talents—but of most unbounded assumptions—was raised in the state.³¹

At the age of forty-two Browne married Margaret Elizabeth Stevens of Shelby County, Alabama, on August 9, 1846.³² During the following nine years Browne remained without a permanent home and without a definite business. However, he was not without funds. In his autobiographical sketch he wrote, "My circumstances for eight or ten years have been gradually improving...and if my property were disposed of at what I suppose it worth and invested profitably I should be in what is called comfortable circumstances nothing more from \$30 to \$50,000. . . ." But his wife was content nowhere except in Alabama, and Browne, therefore, began his next activities

³¹ Browne's notes on Alabama Congressmen compose a six-page manuscript written in 1845-1846. See William Garrett, *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama for Thirty Years*. (Atlanta, 1872), *passim*.

³² Browne's "Autobiographical Sketch." Margaret Stevens Browne was born in Bibb County April 7, 1834. She bore seven children: Claudia (who died at the age of five), Rubé, William Bradford, Cecil, Nina, Arthur, and Elizabeth (who died in infancy).

on land he had acquired in partnership with P. I. Weaver in Shelby County, west of Montevallo..³³ There Browne had discovered three seams of coal and, realizing the importance of that commodity, he tried to persuade a railroad to pass through Montevallo.³⁴ J. T. Story of Montgomery advised him early in 1850 that a bill had been entered in the House of Representatives, providing for the building of a railroad from Gadsden to Senton Landing, missing Montevallo by ten miles. But the House was unwilling to appropriate \$100,000 more for the extra mileage to Montevallo, and Browne had to direct his attention elsewhere.³⁵ In December, 1850, he wrote Lewis Troost, Chief Engineer of the Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road, stating that the route by Montevallo would save the company money, bring the railroad one half mile nearer the coal deposits and enable Browne to ship coal by way of Mobile and New Orleans. He even offered to pay the railroad 50% of the additional cost of altering the route for his benefit. The change, he argued, would not increase the length of the road and would cost not more than \$6,000.³⁶ While the railroad was considering this proposal, Browne removed some of his coal, had it hauled by wagon to the Cahaba River, and shipped to Selma. There it brought \$4.50 per ton and on March 26, 1851, Browne received an order from the George Baker Company of Selma for an additional two carloads of nut coal.³⁷ Still attempting to get railroad transportation, Browne renewed negotiations with the Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road, urging the company to extend its facilities to Selma from Talladega. At a meeting of the directors and officials at Talladega, Ala-

³³ Browne to Margaret S. Browne [near Montevallo], Mobile, March 8, 10, June 16, 1847.

³⁴ *Report of the President and Directors and Chief Engineer, Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road Company, Second Annual Meeting* (Montgomery, 1852), p. 32.

³⁵ J. T. Story to Browne, Montgomery, January 23, 1850.

³⁶ Browne to Lewis Troost, Near Montevallo, December 4, 1850.

³⁷ George O. Baker Company to Browne, Selma, March 26, 1851.

bama, on November 18, 1851, a description of Browne's coal deposits as described by him to Lewis Troost was published: Coal measures will be open to market by your railroad when the line is completed from Selma to Montevallo. William P. Browne has made a partial exploration of the coal seams lying one or two miles from the road south of Montevallo. . . . The first seam he describes to be three feet, four inches thick consisting of compact coal entirely free from shale or foreign matter. The second seam is sixty yards from the first and is three feet thick and also of excellent quality. The third seam is three feet, four inches thick of the same type. Mr. Browne estimates that the workable coal in it amounts to 1,600,000 tons. . . . The width of the Cahaba field west of Montevallo he estimates to be from nine to twelve miles.³⁸

From the report one can see that construction of the extension line had already been started.

In the spring of 1852 Browne postponed his operations because of the illness of one of his children, and not until December, 1853, did he resume work on the mines. He purchased implements and began a search for Negroes that he could lease from their owners.³⁹ He obtained several from Greensboro, Alabama, at \$225 a year for each man and \$125 a year for each woman.⁴⁰ Weaver, Browne's partner in the ownership of the Montevallo land, advocated, however, that Browne begin mining in a small, economical way rather than by means of a large stock company and kept him informed of the market for coal at Selma. Since coal had become very popular by now for heating purposes, Weaver urged his partner to send as much as possible to that town.⁴¹

As demand for coal increased, Browne had difficulty in hauling it to the railroad,⁴² and when he heard that the Mont-

³⁸ *Report of the President*, pp. 31-32.

³⁹ P. I. Weaver to Browne, Selma, November 28, December 7, 1853.

⁴⁰ R. H. Jackson to Browne, Greensboro, Ala., December 22, 1853.

⁴¹ Weaver to Browne, Selma, January 25, February 9, 1854.

⁴² Browne to Margaret S. Browne, Coal Mines, Montevallo, February 21, 1854. In February, 1854, Browne and his wife moved their belongings from Mobile to a cabin near the mines. This was apparently their first permanent home, for the eight years previous they had lived with the Woods' or in Mobile.

gomery & West Point Rail Road planned to discard its flat rails for new T rails, he immediately wrote to Colonel Charles F. Pollard, President, about purchasing enough old rails for use on a connecting branch road from his mines to the Alabama and Tennessee Road.⁴³ It turned out, however, that Pollard's line did not intend to replace its flats for a year or two,⁴⁴ and Browne's transportation troubles continued. Meanwhile, Browne (with Weaver's help) was trying to lease a lot for unloading coal in Selma and attempting to get a contract to furnish fuel for the city gas works.⁴⁵ Throughout 1854 Browne continued to sell to many customers, but his correspondence reveals numerous complaints from buyers who disliked his powdery, dirty coal, but he ignored them for the most part, refusing to "screen" the dirt out because the process consumed time, and, hence, cut his profits.⁴⁶

By 1855 Browne was "pushed to death" for money because he had begun laying his branch railway and simultaneously building a new house for his family.⁴⁷ He sold a part of his holdings to the Alabama Mining and Transportation Company, but retained a right of transit to the railroad,⁴⁸ but, becoming more desperate financially, he engaged Professor M. Tuomey of the Geology Department of the University of Alabama to make a survey and test of the various coal veins of his Montevallo property.⁴⁹ At last, in September, 1856, he was able to borrow funds from a distant relative, Dr. A. Saltmarsh, of Cahaba, Alabama,⁵⁰ and thus was able to secure badly needed equipment and carry on his mining activities.⁵¹

⁴³ Browne to Colonel Charles F. Pollard, Montevallo, September 27, 1854.

⁴⁴ Pollard to Browne, Montgomery, October 7, 1854.

⁴⁵ Weaver to Browne, Selma, November 9, 14, December 8, 1854.

⁴⁶ J. Cartwright to Browne, Mobile, May 12, 1855; Baker to Browne, Selma, February 14, 1856.

⁴⁷ Browne to F. Foone, Montevallo, May 15, 1855.

⁴⁸ "Sale Contract," Browne and Alabama Mining & Transportation Company, February, 1854.

⁴⁹ Browne to Professor M. Tuomey, Montevallo, April 8, 1856. See M. Tuomey, *First Biennial Report on the Geology of Alabama* (Tuskaloosa, 1850).

⁵⁰ Browne to Dr. A. Saltmarsh, Montevallo, September 16, 1856.

⁵¹ John Brantley to Browne, Bibb Forge, Ala., October 29, 1856.

Meanwhile, he had been hauling coal by wagon and still building his branch line. For his cars he had wheels and axles made at Selma and charged to George O. Baker, his agent, explaining that the vein of coal was getting better.⁵² Baker, too, felt encouraged over the prospects. Both men regarded the Alabama Coal and Mining Company as their greatest competitor, for the coal of this company had to be screened several times, and, if Baker and Browne could keep up their supply, the other company would "fizzle out." In fact, Baker wrote, "on Saturday I sold a ton to one of the their *stockholders*." But at the height of their optimism the Alabama and Tennessee River Rail Road stopped furnishing coal cars at Wood's Station because of an old unpaid transportation bill, and Browne had to use his personal influence with President J. W. Lapsley, Troost, and others in order once again to use their cars. He and Baker then signed a year's agreement as partners, the former to furnish coal and the latter to be agent in Selma and Cahaba.

Meanwhile, Browne worked diligently at the mine. Baker demanded twenty or thirty tons of coal weekly, but Browne could not dig that much without a greater number of miners. Baker hinted that they might as well cease operations, if they could not get out at least twenty tons a week,⁵³ and in November, Browne happily wrote to Baker, "I have now laborers enough. The boys will get out about five tons a day."⁵⁴ Indeed, Browne's labor troubles had been somewhat alleviated by his cousin, John B. Ives, who was by now running a plantation in Louisiana and owned sixty slaves. Crops were poor and he was having a hard time making the plantation pay. Having no need for some of his Negroes, he had leased four men to Browne on April 10, 1857, for one year.⁵⁵

⁵² Browne to Baker, Montevallo, December 12, 1856.

⁵³ Baker to Browne, Selma, January 2, 5, 9, 29, February 2, 5, April 1, May 13, 20, 1857.

⁵⁴ Browne to Baker, Montevallo, November 12, 1857.

⁵⁵ John B. and Anne Eliza Ives to Browne, New Orleans, May 8, June 21, December 3, 1857, April 4, 1858.

In 1858 Browne's coal business continued to grow. The Montgomery Gas and Light Company ordered 1,000 tons,⁵⁶ and Browne extended his coal market to Marion and Mobile.⁵⁷ Baker withdrew from the partnership at the end of his year's agreement,⁵⁸ and Browne had to go to Selma to supervise coal sales there. His wife, Margaret, with a foreman, Jasper Campbell, stayed at home and managed both the farm and the mines. She took care of the bookkeeping and correspondence, while Campbell watched over the mines. Both received instructions by letter from Browne at Selma.⁵⁹

By June of 1859, the coal trade had become lively again and the price was up to \$6.50 a ton. George Baker wrote Browne from New York that a war between the North and the South was imminent and that he would like to be in the South, especially at Selma, again. He proposed leasing the coal mines or forming another partnership as before. One obstacle to such a plan was Weaver, Browne's co-owner of the coal property. Baker wished to get Weaver to divide the coal property, letting Weaver have the south half.⁶⁰ Browne, nevertheless, wrote to Weaver and suggested that Weaver take the Selma coal agency and all its net profits,⁶¹ but this plan did not materialize, and in October, 1859, Baker agreed to return to Selma to take over the coal agency.⁶²

Browne, who had been harrassed by lack of labor ever since he had begun mining, once more wrote Dr. Saltmarsh for another loan. He explained that he could not use free

⁵⁶ Montgomery Gas and Light Company to Browne, Montgomery, January 29, 1858.

⁵⁷ E. Loveland to Browne, Marion, June 21, 1858; John Cartwright to Browne, Mobile, October 16, 1858.

⁵⁸ Baker to Browne, Selma, July 16, 1858.

⁵⁹ Browne to Margaret S. Browne, Selma, August 21, September 14, October 25, 31, November 1, 18, December 9, 1858, April 22, May 17, 20, 1859. While her husband was in Selma, Mrs. Browne's house servants, Lewis and Sarah, ran away and were captured near Tuscaloosa. Browne wrote, "I want if possible to get hold of the person who has been tampering with my servants."

⁶⁰ Baker to Browne, New York, June 8, September 1, 22, 1859.

⁶¹ Browne to Weaver, Montevallo, September 25, 1859.

⁶² Baker to Brown, New York, October 24, 1859.

laborers: the experiment had been tried, he declared, by the Alabama Coal and Mining Company and had failed, and he had been unable to hire Negroes since owners were reluctant to allow their slaves to work underground. He was using only six Negroes, three inside the mines and three outside, but he needed twenty and although he already was in debt to Saltmarsh, Browne offered to put up as security all his property which was debt free:

With the best coal property in the state I am unable to supply the limited present demand for it. . . . The property I am prepared to mortgage is as follows:

- (1) The 400 acres of coal land.
- (2) My half of 1200 acres owned by P. I. Weaver and myself.
- (3) My home place of 300 acres.
- (4) My "Bright Hope" place in Bibb County consisting of 500 to 600 acres.
- (5) The negroes I now own, 6 men, 2 women, 1 girl, 2 small children—value \$10,000.
- (6) All the negroes I purchase valued at \$22,500.⁶³

Unfortunately, however, Saltmarsh's capital was already invested, and the best he could do for Browne was to lease him four or five Negroes and promise him a loan in the late spring. Browne's hope of labor and capital to expand his mining operations thus failed, and at a time when, more than ever before, his opportunities were greatest.⁶⁴ Immediately, he attempted through an agent to sell his old Mobile foundry, which he had salvaged from the Hitchcock estate in 1847,⁶⁵ but, because the Great Northern Railroad was planning to erect a depot nearby, he was advised to hold on to the property.⁶⁶ (To be concluded in the July issue)

⁶³ Browne to Saltmarsh, Montevallo, September 21, 1859. Browne wanted Negroes so he would be ready to supply the market at Pensacola when the railroad was completed. Several railroads between Pensacola and Mobile had been proposed, but Browne failed to mention the one to which he referred.

⁶⁴ Saltmarsh to Browne, Cahaba, Ala., October 10, 1859.

⁶⁵ "Agreement" with the Bank of the United States, August 5, 1847, signed by Browne and his wife.

⁶⁶ Aaron Brooks to Browne, Mobile, January 5, 1860.

Birmingham's Carnival of Crime, 1871-1910

BY MARTHA MITCHELL BIGELOW

THE UNITED STATES in the latter part of the nineteenth century experienced a phenomenal shift of population, one that was destined to swing the balance of life from rural to urban areas and make the American city the center of political, social, economic and cultural life. This movement had its good and bad points, of course. But one of the worst problems it posed was that of increased lawlessness, of crime, violence, vice and graft that came in the wake of unchecked expansion. Tenements and saloons mushroomed, prison inmates doubled in number between 1880 and 1890, and the number of murders and homicides was almost three times as great in the nineties as it had been in the previous decade.¹ No section of the nation escaped this alarming development. The South was perhaps less afflicted than other sections, however, because its slower industrialization caused a lag in urbanization, but even in that region there were exceptions—and one of the most notable was Birmingham, Alabama, a “magic” city which lagged in neither industrialism nor crime. As the “boom town” of the South, “Bad Birmingham” excelled in crime and was widely known for its two *M's*—minerals and murders.

Birmingham was founded in December, 1871, but throughout that decade remained a small struggling village of less than 2000 population. During its first decade of existence the

¹ Lyman Abbott, “Introduction” in Helen Campbell, *Darkness and Daylight* (Hartford, 1891), p. 114.

"city" had relatively little crime and violence. The 1880's, however, brought the great iron boom and rapid growth. From 3,086 in 1880 the population increased to 26,178 in 1890, an increase of 748.3%² If the suburbs had been included, the increase would have been about twenty-fold.³ In 1910, when the suburbs were taken in, it had emerged as a full fledged metropolis—Alabama's largest city, the third largest in the South, with an incorporated area of approximately fifty square miles and a population of 138,685.⁴ Such a phenomenal growth naturally brought in adventurers of all types: life was held cheap and murders were the order of the day. Saloons, ladies of easy virtue and colorful robberies combined to present an aspect of general lawlessness. By the late 1870's Birmingham had acquired practically all the criminal aspects of a western frontier town.

It was during the rapid growth of the eighties, however, that Birmingham gained the unenviable reputation of being the most criminal city of its size in the nation. Murder, gambling, drunkenness, and robberies were commonplace. A large number of crimes took place in such evil though colorfully-named districts as Buzzard's Roost, Pigeon Roost, Scratch Ankle, Dry Branch, Hole-in-the-Wall, and Beer Mash. On February 24, 1889, the *Birmingham Sunday Chronicle* remarked: "The dives of Birmingham have been the scenes of more horrible crimes than any other localities on this continent in proportion to their population."⁵ Other cities of the state were constantly poking fun at "Bad Birmingham" and Birmingham, of course, resented it. The *Evening Chronicle* replied on one occasion that the other "towns of the state are too lazy to sin except in a lazy, negative way."

² *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Population* (Washington, 1895), p. 56.

³ *Birmingham News*, March 14, 1890.

⁴ *Birmingham News and Age-Herald*, March 21, 1943.

⁵ *Birmingham Sunday Chronicle*, February 24, 1889.

On November 7, 1903, the *Birmingham News* estimated that there were over fifty dives in the city, adding, "A visit to one of these places will strikingly illustrate to the thoughtful man the great meaning of the term 'the lights and shadows, of a city.' On one corner a brilliantly lighted store where the rich and well to do purchase their finery, in the alley not far distant, filth, squalor, lawlessness and human depravity."⁶

The large number of arrests in the city was one of the factors that contributed to Birmingham's bad name. Over a period of two decades (1888-1908) there was an average arrest of about 30% of the population per year, or three persons out of every ten.⁷ In 1902 statistics of fourteen cities of approximately the same size showed Birmingham leading with 9,626 arrests. Next in line was Spokane, Washington, with 5,117, and the smallest was South Bend, Indiana, with 889 arrests. Comparative statistics such as these, however, did not present a true picture. The police jurisdiction in Birmingham extended three miles beyond the city limits and comparisons on the basis of population considered only Birmingham proper.⁸ Since most of the miners of the surrounding territory came into the city for their "sprees," Birmingham's population was often credited with their crimes and arrests. And many of the arrests were for trivial offenses. The fee system of Jefferson County put a premium on arrests and, thus, the more people hauled into court the more lucrative it was for the officer, the court, and the city government which could put culprits to work in the mines and on the streets. This was generally recognized, and prominent lawyers and busi-

⁶ *News*, November 7, 1903.

⁷ The number of arrests were: 1888, 7,204; 1898, 7,752; 1900, 9,005; 1901, 10,630; 1902, 11,648; 1904, 11,925; 1905, 9,795; 1906, 10,577; 1907, 11,814; 1908, 7,297. See *Sunda Chronicle*, March 10, 1889; *Age-Herald*, March 15, 1899, June 20, 1900, May 14, 1902, May 14, 1903, May 11, 1904, May 5, 1905, January 6, 1907, January 6, 1908, January 20, 1909.

⁸ *News*, April 7, 1902; *Age-Herald*, May 11, 1904, January 9, 1907.

ness men and others protested against the system. In 1910 the Chamber of Commerce charged that the acute scarcity of labor in the Birmingham district was due to petty persecutions by deputy sheriffs.⁹ In the same year, after there had been 1,500 arrests in one month, Chief of Police Bodeker stated that officers were misusing their authority in arresting for too trivial reasons, and that the police department existed for the protection of the city and not to make money for it.¹⁰ Thus it is evident that because of peculiar conditions existing in the Alabama city, many of the arrests there would never have been made in other localities and perhaps a false impression of the criminality of the population as a whole was given.

Of the types of crimes committed, the most spectacular was, of course, murder.¹¹ In 1902 the *News* stated that the crime of murder far outranked all others. During that year there had been approximately four each month or one for every week between meetings of the Grand Juries.¹² In 1909 the coroner's book showed that there had been more crime than ever before—142 homicides. This meant twelve killings a month or more than one every three days.¹³ One minister in preaching on lawlessness in the city said there were more

⁹ *News*, October 21, 1910; *Age-Herald*, November 18, 1904. The Birmingham *Labor Advocate* estimated in 1891 that the Sheriff of Jefferson County made approximately \$10,000 annually or twice the salary of the governor of Massachusetts. See also, Shelby M. Harrison, "A Cash-Nexus for Crime," *The Survey*, XXVII, 1546 ff. (January, 1912).

¹⁰ *Age-Herald*, August 9, 1910.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, September 3, 1907, March 11, 1907, May 5, 1906, June 24, 1908; Birmingham *Ledger*, April 25, 1900. Such headlines as these were frequent: "Thomas G. Hewlet Killed by Harry Haynes in Peerless Bar." "John T. Shugart Thought To Be Fatally Injured. Three others shot." "Cut Off Victim's Head with an Axe while He was Asleep." "Three Murders, Two Hold-Ups and Cutting Affrays Keep Officers on the Jump." "Though the average citizen labors under the impression that Labor Day passed off very quietly his opinion is not shared by police authorities. While only two murders marred the day, a practically continual stream of minor offenders darkened the doors of the city bastille."

¹² *News*, October 3, 1902.

¹³ *Age-Herald*, January 2, 1910.

murders in Jeffersons County in one year than in all of Great Britain with its forty millions of population.¹⁴

A rural-southern tendency toward violence plus the almost universal practice of carrying concealed weapons perhaps accounted for a large number of the murders. Then, too, it was apparently very difficult to get a conviction in cases of homicide. In one instance where the jury returned the usual verdict of "not guilty," the judge took the unusual step of censuring the jury for returning such a verdict in face of the evidence.¹⁵ Indiscriminate use of the pistol by officers of the law added its toll to the deaths. The Grand Jury for 1904 made the following indictment of the practice:

The jury feel that they will not have done their duty did they not call the attention of the court and the people to the appalling disregard for life in Jefferson County. Much of the time of the jury has been taken up with investigation of this crime. We find an army of men in the county commissioned as peace officers and too many of them parading the county walking arsenals. Something should be done to control this indiscriminate licensing to murder.¹⁶

Sixty percent of the arrests and by far the large majority of those killed by officers and otherwise were Negroes. In 1895 one officer shot a little Negro girl of thirteen who was picking up coal near a railroad car. The Negroes held a mass meeting at the Shiloh Baptist Church and issued a stirring protest and appeal to the white people of the town. Some of the people were not indifferent to the problem presented by this appeal. The Birmingham Trade Council denounced the practice of carrying concealed weapons and urged state officials to investigate the killing of little Lizzie and to do impartial justice.¹⁷

This disregard for black life naturally spread over into white, and leading citizens deplored the fact and spoke out

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1904.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1907.

¹⁶ *News*, June 8, 1904.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1895.

against it. A minister declared, "We have no criminal law in this county for white men, our criminal law is all for negroes. Shackled gangs clean streets for minor misdemeanors while homicides go free."¹⁸ Alex T. London, a prominent Birmingham lawyer, recognized this and in a letter to the paper scoring the lawlessness in Birmingham he concluded:

Cruel, brutal, inexcusable murders of Negroes do not even excite public comment much less conviction, and we have thus had our sense of justice blunted until it is almost destroyed, and wonder that things can be so. It is manifest that we have carried our own, the white people's interest too far. Nothing else seems to have concerned us and by the inevitable law we are reaping our reward.¹⁹

Although other crimes added to the list of arrests, none caught the public eye like murder. Gambling houses ran wide open during most of this period and, if there were sporadic efforts to clean them up, very little was ever accomplished. Robberies and burglaries were common in the eighties and afterwards. There were continual suggestions of the need for vigilante committees. Especially was this true after 1900 when highway robbery became particularly bad in the outlying districts.²⁰

None of these suggestions of extra legal methods for delivering summary justice materialized, however, and on the whole mob activities in Birmingham were small. In the course of these years Birmingham resorted to mob vengeance only twice, once in the case of a Negro, the other in the case of a white man. On November 24, 1883, a Negro who had been jailed on a rape charge was taken out and lynched. There were rumors of a Negro uprising in protest and the mayor called out the militia. During the next week-end there was another rape case and another angry mob. This time the governor had to send in troops.²¹ This was the only in-

¹⁸ *Age-Herald*, July 11, 1904.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1904.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, January 4, 1903, June 18, 1903, October 24, 1905.

²¹ *Iron Age*, November 29, 1883, December 6, 1883.

stance on record of a lynching in Birmingham, but riots, disturbances and hangings were more common in the surrounding mining camps. Particularly in the turbulent 1890's did the newspapers carry such stories as, "Race riot at Brookside. Pitched battle between 100 white men and 40 negroes. Sheriff of Birmingham and 24 men sent." "Negroes rioted at Gate City—drunken mob, retired to the hillside and shot into the town all night."²² These riots were due in part, at least, to the facts that economic competition between Negroes and whites was greater in the mining districts and that the 1890's were depression years. In addition, there were strikes and general unrest to encourage the disorderly elements of both races. But even these inflammable conditions did not bring organized race conflict in Birmingham proper. The experience of the eighties seemed to have cured the city of mob uprisings.

Birmingham's other experience with mob rule was in the Dick Hawes case in 1888. Hawes had murdered his wife and two children in a very brutal manner and sunk their bodies in East Lake. When the crime came to light, the town seethed with indignation and a mob gathered around the jail. The sheriff, however, remained true to his duty to protect the prisoner, and when the mob tried to break into the jail it was fired upon by his deputies. Several men were killed and many wounded, but the mob dispersed.²³

Much of the crime in Birmingham was laid at the door of the saloon. A letter to the editor of the *Iron Age* in 1881 complained that the city contained two saloons for every church. City directories listed 59 saloons in 1890, 84 in 1901 and 121 in 1907. Drunkenness was so common that the *Observer* stated, "every hour of the day men may be seen

²² *Sunday Chronicle*, September 15, 29, 1889; *Age-Herald*, August 26, 1892; *News*, June 16, 1890, July 31, 1895, March 22, 1897, March 26, 1899, April 30, 1901.

²³ *Sunday Chronicle*, February 10, 1889; So great was the interest in the Hawes case that an attempt was made to exhibit him at the State Fair (*ibid.*, September 22, 1889).

staggering through the public places of the city.”²⁴ Such sights were especially evident on holidays. In 1899 over 100 arrests were made on Christmas Day alone. As a general rule during the entire year over one-half of the arrests made were for drunkenness and disorderly conduct.²⁵

Protests against such conditions began early and the movement was toward higher and higher licenses for the saloons and even stricter regulations. This movement came to a head during the administration of Mayor George B. Ward, 1905-1907. Saloons were then regulated more than ever before, licenses of the most disorderly Negro bars were revoked, and effort was made to take the saloons out of the “red light” district, and licenses were raised as much as several thousand dollars. There was a determined group on the Board of Aldermen who fought this movement in 1906, but by 1907 they too were advocating high licenses and regulations in an effort to stem the tidal wave of prohibition sweeping in on the county. The summer and fall of 1907 saw the height of the fight for prohibition in Birmingham and Jefferson County. Under Alabama’s local option laws a petition for a referendum was filed on September 19, 1907, and the election set for October 28. The fight, which took on something of the force of a religious revival, was led by the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Pastor’s Union. On the day of election Birmingham’s streets were filled with women and children cheering the wearers of white ribbons and hissing the wearers of red. The band from the Boys’ Industrial School played religious airs, and the students from Owenton College, the Methodist Conference College, were dismissed from classes for the day to join the ranks of the prohibitionist paraders. The polling places assumed the aspects of a prayer meeting as the women and children

²⁴ Birmingham *Observer*, December 2, 1881; *Iron Age*, January 26, 1881; *Birmingham City Directories*, 1890, 1901, 1902, 1907.

²⁵ *Age-Herald*, December 26, 1899, November 1, 1907.

gathered outside to sing and pray. Their prayers were answered—Jefferson County went dry by about 1,800 votes and thus “Bad Birmingham” eliminated its saloons a year before the rest of the state did under a state wide prohibition law effective January 1, 1909.²⁶ But the sentiment for prohibition was not so strong in Birmingham as this indicates, for in this election Birmingham proper went wet. However, the suburbs and the rest of the county by voting dry, took the city with them.

The next effort of the prohibitionists was to put an amendment into the state Constitution. This election took place in the fall of 1909 and the same sort of tactics were used. The Anti-Saloon League sponsored a mile-long parade in the city. Both sides had ragtime bands on this occasion and tried to drown out each other. The women and children with their hymns and ribbons were again at the polls, but this time the pressure tactics did not work and the amendment was defeated in Birmingham and Jefferson County by a large majority.²⁷ This was not a vote against prohibition *per se*, but only against putting it into the Constitution. It did, however, show a recession of prohibition sentiment in the city.²⁸

The elimination of the saloon did not end drunkenness nor lessen the number of arrests or amount of crime connected with liquor. A number of the saloons were accused of turning into soft drink places and continuing to sell liquor on the sly. Many of the saloons must have become soft drink stands, for the *Birmingham City Directory*, which had listed only one soft drink establishment in 1907, in 1909 listed 102—just about the previous number of

²⁶ *Ibid.*, December 20, 1906, September 20, 26, 27, October 22, 29, 1907; *News*, May 1, September 9, 26, October 28, 29, 1907.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, November 29, 1909; *Age-Herald*, November 30, 1909; I. B. Sellers, *The Prohibition Movement in Alabama 1702 to 1943* (Chapel Hill, 1943), p. 146.

²⁸ The election left Alabama under local option laws under which a new referendum was held in August, 1911, at which time Birmingham voted wet and sanctioned the return of the saloons as well.

saloons. Many of them retained the same name they had had as saloons and it is probable that some of them continued to sell liquor. The problem now was one of law enforcement and a Law and Order League was formed to see that prohibition laws were carried out by the police. "Blind Tigers," sprang up and the papers were filled with accounts of raids against them. Sheriff Higdon estimated in 1910 that there were 700 places selling liquor in Birmingham and in the same year the Grand Jury charged open violation of the prohibition laws. The number of arrests for drunkenness dropped sharply, but arrests for prohibition violation were almost as large. It was estimated in 1910 that there were twenty-five arrests a week for such violations.²⁹

The foregoing facts show that crime was extensive indeed in Birmingham at the turn of the last century. The city had grown so rapidly that police protection could not keep pace with the development of the outer districts. The city was always cramped for money, patrolmen were poorly paid and during most of the period had to work twelve hours a day. Under such conditions superior police were difficult to secure, and there was much drunkenness and many other offenses perpetrated by the officers themselves. The Police Commission in 1905 reported that they had had to try one or more offenders at each session for the previous five months. Efficiency was lessened by factions within the department and jurisdictional disputes, such as those that occurred when the department was put under a Board of Commissioners in 1892 and again when the Commission was changed in 1907, were not unusual.³⁰ In addition to these weaknesses Birmingham was the "dumping ground" for convicts and other undesirable citizens who were brought there to work

²⁹ *Age-Herald*, June 8, 1890, January 7, 1908, November 12, 1908, September 25, 1910; *City Directories*, 1907, 1909.

³⁰ *Birmingham Courier*, October 17, 1889; *Age-Herald*, April 12, 1903, October 13, 1907; *Ledger*, June 1, 1908.

in the mines. When their terms of service were up, they were freed in the county and formed, or so many citizens believed, a body of released but not reformed criminals. Continued protest by respectable citizens of Jefferson County brought about the passage of a law (in 1903) requiring that released convicts must be immediately returned to the counties where they were convicted.³¹ This, however, brought little relief as many of the convicts learned the mining trade while imprisoned and returned to the district when freed.

Furthermore, Birmingham was the largest Alabama city and criminals could lose themselves in such places as Buzzard's Roost or Scratch Ankle with greater ease than in smaller towns and, hence, could ply their trades with greater impunity. There was more wealth and ready cash in Birmingham and criminals interested in robberies, burglaries, and thefts of all kinds found the town a well-paying locale in which to practice their profession. Having early acquired a reputation for wickedness, Birmingham was naturally the spot toward which the disorderly elements of the state drifted.

In addition there were the Negroes. Living in crowded, unsanitary quarters and on the lowest economic level and only a few years out of slavery, they presented a rich field for crime and violence of all sorts. Indeed, they constituted 40% of the population of the city and furnished about 60% of its criminals.

To all of this must be added the fact that between 1880-1910 Birmingham was essentially a "boom town." It was always crowded with workers who, seeking release from long, dreary hours in the pits, turned to the saloons for solace. With liquor flowing freely, houses of prostitution easily available and gambling just up the back alley, there followed a natural corollary of crime and debauchery. All of these factors and others, no doubt, combined to make the city merit her sobriquet of "Bad Birmingham."

³¹ *Age-Herald*, October 27, 1903.

Notes and Documents

CARL SCHURZ LETTER
FROM ALABAMA, AUGUST 15-16, 1865

Edited by JOSEPH H. MAHAFFEY

IN HIS ATTEMPT to restore civil government in the South and to acquaint himself with social and economic conditions in that region, President Andrew Johnson consulted many men of widely different views,¹ chief of whom was Major-General Carl Schurz, German-American orator and political leader.² Schurz, an advocate of Negro suffrage, was asked to make a tour of the southern states, especially those along the Gulf of Mexico, for the purpose of reporting to the President "whatever information I could gather as to the existing condition of things, and of suggesting to him such measures as my observations might lead me to believe advisable."³

Schurz began his journey in mid-July, 1865, later reporting the following itinerary:

I landed at Hilton Head, South Carolina, on July 15, visited Beaufort, Charleston, Orangeburg, and Columbia, returned to Charleston and Hilton Head; thence I went to Savannah, traversed the State of Georgia, visiting Augusta, Atlanta, Macon, Milledgeville and Columbus; went through Alabama, by way of Opelika, Montgomery, Selma and Demopolis and through Mississippi, by way of Meridian, Jackson and Vicksburg; then descended the Mississippi to New Orleans, touch-

¹ Among other investigators were Harvey M. Watterson, Benjamin C. Truman, Salmon P. Chase, and General U. S. Grant. See William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* (New York, 1907), pp. 47-50, and Walter Lynwood Fleming, *The Sequel of Appomattox* (New Haven, 1921), pp. 27-29.

² The biographers of Schurz are Claude M. Fuess, *Carl Schurz, Reformer* (New York, 1932); Chester V. Easum, *The Americanization of Carl Schurz* (Chicago, 1929); and Joseph Schafer, *Carl Schurz, Militant Liberal* (Evansville, Wisconsin, 1930).

³ Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, III, 158 (New York, 1906-1907).

ing at Natchez; from New Orleans I visited Mobile, Alabama, and the Teche country, in Louisiana, and then spent again some days at Natchez and Vicksburg, on my way to the North.⁴

Johnson hoped that Schurz's report would support a generous policy of reconstruction, but Schurz gave his powerful aid to the Radical Republicans, who were planning, as Thaddeus Stevens put it, to "humble the proud traitors" and to treat the southern state as conquered provinces.⁵ When Schurz returned to Washington in October, he drew up a skillfully constructed and fully documented report.⁶ Schurz discovered everywhere in the South an "utter absence of national feeling;" he found among the whites a belief that Negroes would not work without compulsion; he felt that national control should not cease until a system of free labor had been established; and he declared that Negro suffrage should be made a condition precedent to "readmission" of the southern states.⁷

Despite the objections of Johnson, the Schurz report was brought before the Senate on December 19, 1865.⁸ The Radicals in Congress accepted it as conclusive, for it helped them to secure their primary object: the ascendancy of the Republican party. The report has been called "the factual basis of the congressional system of reconstruction,"⁹ and "a leading item in the case which was made up for the public against the president's policy."¹⁰ Schurz, never renowned for modesty, exulted:

My report scored a great success with the Members of Congress. Sumner proposed to the Senate to have 100,000 copies printed. The

⁴ U. S. Senate *Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 1 Sess., 5 (Washington, 1866). Hereafter cite as Schurz, *Report*.

⁵ Fleming, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

⁶ See Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, I, 279-374 (New York, 1913).

⁷ Schurz, *Report*, pp. 1-51.

⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Cong., 1 Sess., 79 (Washington, 1866).

⁹ Schafer, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁰ Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

House also asked for it. The President expressed himself to a Senator in this way: 'The only great mistake I have yet made was to send Schurz to the South.'—I believe it:¹¹

Was Carl Schurz the unbiased observer that he claimed to himself to be?¹² The evidence indicates otherwise. Before accepting the southern mission, Schurz was granted "one or two days to consider the matter." Meanwhile, he consulted Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase. Chase thought that Schurz had "an opportunity for rendering a valuable service to the country" and that he should not think of declining. Stanton considered it "absolutely necessary" that Schurz accept the mission, for it would prevent the President from later saying to the Radicals: "I have acted upon the information which was at my command. I wished to send down one of your own men to enlighten me about the state of affairs and give me his advice, but he did not wish to go!"¹³

Schurz wrote immediately to his good friend, Charles Sumner, and indicated that because of financial difficulties and the necessity for an extra premium on his life insurance, he might be forced to decline the President's request. Sumner hurriedly replied,

I am glad that he [Johnson] has invited you to journey in the rebel States. You *must* go. Let me know the *extra* premium on your policy. The friends of the cause here will gladly pay it. I write this in earnest and as business. Send me the bill; and do you go at once on the journey.

Sumner implored Schurz to "make one more effort to arrest the policy of the President," for that policy "*must break*

¹¹ Letter to Mrs. Schurz, January 6, 1866, in Bancroft, *op. cit.*, I, 374

¹² "I had conscientiously endeavored to see Southern conditions as they were. I had not permitted any political considerations or any preconceived opinions on my part, to obscure my perception and discernment in the slightest degree" (*Reminiscences*, III, 202).

¹³ *Ibid.*, III, 158; letter, Schurz to his wife, June 16, 1865, in Bancroft, *op. cit.*, I, 264.

down."¹⁴ Sumner offered to send a clerk, experienced in collecting material for the Freedmen's Commission, to accompany him,¹⁵ but Schurz had already engaged a man.¹⁶

A few days earlier, in a letter to Friedrich Althaus, June 25, 1865, Schurz had discussed his views on reconstruction and referred to his anticipated journey: "My report, which will probably be laid before Congress, can perhaps be so shaped as to play a distinctive role in this weighty business. I shall probably start out in a few days to perform this duty."¹⁷

It was Charles Sumner who arranged for Schurz to write a series of articles for the Boston *Daily Advertiser*.¹⁸ The correspondence was to remain anonymous.¹⁹ Schurz later justified his behavior by saying that as the Secretary of War understood and appreciated, I had to earn something in some way to make my journey financially possible, that my newspaper letters contained nothing that should have been treated as official secrets, but incidents of travel, anecdotes, picturesque views of Southern conditions with some reflections thereon, mostly things which would not find proper elaboration in official reports,—and all this quite anonymous so as not to have the slightest official character.²⁰

¹⁴ This letter has never been found. See Sumner's letter to Schurz, June 22, 1865, in Carl Schurz Collection, Library of Congress. All letters hereafter cited are in this Collection, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁵ Letters, Sumner to Schurz, June 25, 29, and letter, Schurz to Sumner, June 27, 1865. Schurz wrote that "the gentleman you speak of would in many respects be of vastly more use to me," and that he would be happy to take him if "friends of the cause" would pay the expenses.

¹⁶ Secretary Stanton ordered an officer of a New York regiment, Captain Orlemann, to accompany Schurz as his secretary (*Reminiscences*, III, 159).

¹⁷ Joseph Schafer, *Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz* (Evanston, Wisconsin, 1928), pp. 338-342.

¹⁸ On June 29, 1865, Sumner wrote Schurz, "The newspaper for which you are to write is not determined. I will let you know by telegraph and letter. Keep me informed of your address;" and on July 11, "Send your second letter to Geo. L. Stearns, Esq., Boston. He will give it a final direction, and will inform you. I send a copy of the *Advertiser*, from which you will see the type of correspondence." See Bancroft, *op. cit.*, I, 267.

¹⁹ Letter, Schurz to Sumner, August, 2, 1865: "I do not wish it known that I am writing for the *Advertiser*. You will easily divine the reason." See also letter, Schurz to Johnson, September 5, 1865, in Bancroft, *op. cit.*, I, 270-272.

²⁰ *Reminiscences*, III, 195-196.

Five radically-tinted letters, signed "Observer," appeared in the Boston newspaper,²¹ but one letter, written from Opelika and Montgomery, Alabama, August 15-16, 1865, the original of which is in the Schurz Collection of the Library of Congress, never appeared in the *Advertiser*.²² It is published for the first time below.

It is evident that Schurz started on his southern tour under monetary obligations to those hostile to the President. Although Schurz may have been sincere, his conclusions were hardly reached after open-minded investigation. While in the South, he consorted with politicians, Radical soldiers, and Freedmen's Bureau agents who were opposed to Johnson's policy. In short, Schurz saw the South that he and his Radical friends wished him to see.²³

However, his sojourn in the camp of the vindictive Radicals was of brief duration. Later, when he grasped the complex problems involved, his attitude became more moderate. He was one of the first among Republicans in Missouri who championed, at the expense of their party standing, the re-enfranchisement of those disfranchised because of their participation in the conflict; he was one of the first Republicans in the Senate who advocated a general amnesty, who never ceased to denounce the abuse of the so-called carpet-bag governments, and who zealously opposed every policy or measure calculated to withhold from the people of the South their rights and privileges as citizens.²⁴

Opelika, Ala., Aug. 15th, 1865.

Where and what is Opelika? A poor little village situated at the point where the Montgomery and West Point and the Columbus and

²¹ The letters were written from Charleston, South Carolina, July 17, 21, 25, and from Savannah, Georgia, July 31, August 8, 1865.

²² "I stopped writing for the *Advertiser* as soon as I heard that my name was out and people were making a fuss about the matter," Schurz wrote Sumner, October 17, 1865.

²³ Howard Kennedy Beale, *The Critical Year* (New York, 1930), p. 72.

²⁴ Letter, Schurz to the editor of the *Savannah News*, January 30, 1883.

Opelika Railways meet. And what causes the unfortunate traveller to stop between such towns as Columbus, Ga., and Montgomery, Ala., at such a place long enough to write a letter? I will avail myself of this opportunity to give the patient reader an idea of the delights of travel in the South at the present time. Let us traverse the state of Georgia. If you want to go from Savannah to Augusta, you must look out for a boat to take you up Savannah river, the railroad being not yet repaired. I was fortunate enough to find one just when I wanted it. You pay your passage and desire to be shown to your stateroom. You are informed that the ladies have to be accommodated first. The boat being small and there being but few staterooms on it, but a crowd of passengers, your chances are slim. If you are not fortunate enough to secure a bunk, your attention is directed to a pile of mattresses lying somewhere on deck. When night comes, you must endeavor to make sure of one, and then you may squat wherever you find room. Your rest may be interrupted by persons stumbling over you in the dark, but you do not mind that.

I was one of the happy men that secured a berth in a stateroom. Of course the first question addressed to the captain is: When do you think we shall get to Augusta? "I think," responds the captain hopefully, "I think I shall take you there in forty-eight hours." Forty-eight hours in this saloon filled with an offensive whisky smell, or in this close coffin of a stateroom, or in these narrow gangways where one man can hardly pass another—it is a cheerless prospect. Still, you resign yourself to your fate. You retire to your stateroom to make yourself comfortable. The boat starts. You notice that she hums rather slowly and indulge in some conjectures as to the cause. Perhaps she will run faster when she is fairly started. Suddenly you notice that there are two huge flatboats attached to the sides of the boat which she is tugging up stream with difficulty.

"Captain, what do these flatboats mean? Are you going to tug these unwieldy things up to Augusta?"

"Yes, sir. You see, they are lighters. When we run aground we put the freight into these flats and lighten the boat so as to get her over the shallows. Maybe they will load the flats with cotton at Augusta and float them down."

This is aggravating. With the flats attached, the boat can certainly not make over five miles an hour; still you calculate that making steadily five miles, you can just reach Augusta in forty-eight hours, and being a philosopher who is determined not to trouble himself

about trifles, you settle down again in quiet resignation. For several miles above Savannah you see nothing but rice plantations on both sides of the river, or rather what were rice plantations in days gone by. Swampy fields as far as the eye reaches; here and there clumps of magnificent trees, and under them crumbling, blackened brickwalls overtopped by lonesome chimneys. Sherman's army has been in this neighborhood.

Now the rice fields cease and the woods close in on both banks of the river. The boat glides along between two green walls of rich mossy foliage, impervious to the eye. A magnificent sight. Suddenly the engine stops. What is the matter? You see the boat running straightways into the wall of green. The river makes a sharp bend. As the boat is going to round it, the current strikes the flats and throws the boat upon the bank. You hear much swearing and halloing. At last you see two negroes getting into a canoe to carry a line to the opposite bank. The line is fastened, one end to a tree, the other to the boat. The boat is pulled off from the shore, the engine is put in motion and the boat swings around the bend. You find this a pretty operation, but you find also that it has cost you about three quarters of an hour.

"Will this happen frequently, captain? It will detain us considerably."

"Oh, sir, you see this is the worst bend in the river. There isn't a boat on the river that can round this point without making fast."

You believe it and compose yourself. You have hardly composed yourself, when you hear the two bells, the signal to stop the engine, and again you find yourself under the shady boughs of the trees on the bank. The two negroes carrying the line are once more in the canoe, and the gallant boat goes through the same operation.

"Captain, it seems there are several sharp bends in this river."

"Yes, sir, a good many. But tomorrow we are going to have a long stretch as straight as a ruler."

Very well. You figure up the time you have lost and come to the conclusion that you are not likely to get from Savannah to Augusta in forty-eight hours. Maybe in fifty-two, certainly not more than fifty-six. Night comes on, the air grows cool and pleasant and you watch the gliding motion of the boat between the gigantic hedges. Suddenly the boat stops again. But all remains quiet. No canoe with two negroes to carry the line to the opposite shore.

"Captain, will you get off here without making fast?"

"No, sir, that isn't it," says the captain calmly. "I might turn this point without difficulty. But we'll stop here for the night and start again at sunrise. There are some ugly bends right above here that I can't make in the dark."

Stop until sunrise! That will detain us six or seven hours. You find that you can hardly get to Augusta in fifty-six hours. But tomorrow comes the "long stretch as straight as a ruler," and you will make up for lost time. You retire to your stateroom. The air is close, and there is a smell about the whole establishment which can not clearly be defined. You clamber in to your bunk; to your surprise you find but one sheet on the mattress; you are expected to cover yourself with a kind of blanket of doubtful color which chafes you where it touches your skin. Shall you call for the steward? You will wake up the whole community, and there will be a dreadful explosion of foul oaths. Shall you go and try to find him so as to whisper your grievances into his ears? But the floor is covered with sleepers and you cannot get out of your stateroom without stepping upon somebody. Although it is oppressively warm, you conclude that it is best to sleep in your clothes.

The sun rises and the boat starts. You are still gliding slowly and quietly between the walls of green. You see no human habitation nor a living being on the banks, except a couple of "sandhillers" or "clay-eaters" fishing. But you go through one or two "sharp bend" operations before breakfast and through half a dozen before dinner. After dinner the same.

"Captain, where is that 'stretch as straight as a ruler'?"

"Ah, sir, I am afraid we shall not get to it tonight. These flatboats impair the speed of the boat considerably. But I am sure she will prove the fastest boat on the river when she gets a fair chance."

"Captain, I wish she had a fair chance now."

Although a philosopher, you begin to feel that this is rather a dull and tedious affair. You resolve to study your fellow passengers. There are a few "Yankee" officers, good fellows who have seen much service, and are of the opinion that the Southern people are as bitter as ever. There are two Southern ladies, hightoned ladies, undoubtedly, for they turn their backs whenever any of the Yankee officers passes them. Nor do they thank you when you offer them a chair or hand them a dish across the table. But being neither pleasant in their demeanor nor in any other way attractive, they are permitted to have their time to themselves. There is an old gentleman from Alabama who from

the moment the boat left Savannah until the evening of the second day has been continually reading a number of the New York Metropolitan Record, now and then starting up and assuring whomsoever he can lay his hands upon, that the Metropolitan Record is the best and most statesmanlike paper in the world and ought to be read and circulated by every true Southern man, and that the Democratic party is a great party, and that the people of the South will regain their influence yet through that same Democratic party. He is also of the opinion that the negro will not work without whipping, and that the Federal soldiers ought to whip negroes whenever a planter wants them to. (He wanted to convince me of the soundness of his theory but did not succeed.)

There are some Northern cotton speculators who think that we ought to have a full cotton crop next year; and if negroes do not work on the cottonfields without compulsion, well, then, they ought to be compelled. There are some subjugated rebel officers who talk very pleasantly when they are in company with Northern people, but pile up huge heaps of the most horrible oaths about Yankees and niggers when they are alone among themselves. Finally, there is an Englishman who has dabbled somewhat in blockade running and is now speculating in cotton. He assures you that it would be difficult to find anything in the Constitution of the United States that would justify a war of the general government against sovereign states, and that slavery, whatever might be said against it, was certainly a moral institution in so far as it protected the virtue of the white women of the South by placing the black women of the South in the absolute power of their owners. On the whole, our British cousin is by no means satisfied with the rash and inconsiderate manner in which the Northern people has treated the South. Everybody on the boat seems to admit that our British cousin should have the privilege of remaining undisturbed in the enjoyment of his opinion.

This sort of company soon ceases to be attractive and you retire again within yourself and fall back upon your own resources. Night comes and the boat stops again until sunrise. The third day of the trip dawns upon you; no change except that there is no more ice water to be had, and the boat has to stop near some spring or stream to fill its watercasks. The two negroes with the line are again brought into frequent requisition as you arrive at a sharp bend. At last, towards evening, you reach "the long stretch as straight as a ruler," and the boat glides along comfortably enough until she reaches the

stopping place for the night. The fourth day of the trip arrives, and to make a long story short, you reach Augusta after about eighty hours of travel instead of forty-eight, and bless benignant fate for having permitted you to reach it at all. But before you go ashore your temper is tried once more in a rather ludicrous manner. A paper is presented to you for signature, a paper expressing the heartfelt thanks of the passengers to the captain and officers of the boat for their uniform kindness and attention during this most "*successful, pleasant and speedy trip.*"

You reach Augusta. Of the two hotels of the town you choose one, and after the first meal you will wish to have chosen the other. On you go to Atlanta by railroad, at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour. For your railroad meals you pay a dollar a piece, and the meals are such that every time, after having paid your dollar, you invest a quarter in peaches and watermelons to satisfy the craving of your stomach. At Atlanta you find, amidst the ruins of the city, a hotel the best accommodations of which are out of doors. From Atlanta to Macon and from Macon to Columbus you travel by railroad at the rate of seven miles an hour. Sometimes the locomotives seem to forget themselves and run a little faster. But with a conscientiousness which puts your patience to the severest test, the conductor will halt the train at the next station long enough to make up for the time gained. So you get to Columbus. At the hotel you are informed that in order to reach Montgomery the next day, you must get up at 3 o'clock. A. M., and when you are shown into your dirty room, a room filled with a thousand stale odors, you regret that your departure is put off as far. At all events, you calculate, that starting at 3 o'clock in the morning and having only about 96 miles to make, you will certainly reach Montgomery long before dark. At Columbus you cannot learn anything about the matter; there are only dark rumors afloat about a break in the road, and a detention somewhere. With these vague terrors hovering around, you, but still hopeful, you enter the omnibus that is to take you to the railroad on the other side of the Chattahoochie river, for [General J. H.] Wilson has destroyed all the bridges. You wish he had not, for the crossing by flatboat is by no means a pleasant thing. After nearly an hour's ride, the omnibus deposits you on an open field where you see a railroad track and two or three freight cars with a locomotive attached. This is your train; no passenger cars, for Wilson has destroyed the rolling stock. It is 4 o'clock and you weave on at the rate of less than six miles an

hour. At 8 o'clock you reach a station where you are informed that you have to change cars, and, upon inquiry, you receive the further information that there will be no train for Montgomery until 4:40 P. M. So it is for this that you were turned out of your bed at 3 o'clock in the morning! All you have gained is a distance of twenty-five or six miles and the privilege of stopping some eight or nine hours at Opelika. Your gentle readers will pardon me for having devoted these dreary hours of misery partly to sleep and partly to a description of the delights of travel in the South in the summer of 1865.

P. S. Montgomery, Ala., Aug. 16th.

The picture would hardly be complete without this postscript. Leaving Opelika at 4:40 P. M., travelling again in box-cars of the roughest kind, we arrived at Shorters, 22 miles from Montgomery, at 9:30 P. M. The road from Shorters to Montgomery having been destroyed by Wilson and not being repaired yet, we were "invited" to take seats in a stage coach, price seven dollars per seat, baggage extra. There were three stage coaches, all well filled with passengers; the owner certainly makes a handsome thing of it. I had the good fortune of finding a hack for myself and a friend—a comfortable carriage with two stout mules driven by two boys, the oldest of whom was about sixteen. We soon entered into conversation with them. They were the sons of a planter who lived near Montgomery. Had not been in the army, being too young. How did they come to drive a hack? It was no hack, properly speaking. It was their family carriage. It had not been used much before except when they went to "preachin" and to parties. It used to be a fine carriage; they didn't drive mules then. Oh no, they drove a fine span of bays. They now used the carriage as a hack. They wanted to make some money. Wanted something to live on. They had had sixty slaves on their plantation. When the Yankees came the slaves left the place. Some of them came back afterwards, but the place was in very bad shape. The Yankees had burned all their cotton and run off their stock. The concern was "pretty well broke" and they had to work for a living. The old family coach was now doing good service. I turned the conversation upon other subjects. How did they like the Yankees? Didn't like the Yankees much; still, liked them better than at first. How did the people in this vicinity like Governor [Lewis E.] Parsons? The planters did not like Gov. Parsons much. He might be a good man enough, but the planters wanted to have their niggers back

and wanted to have slavery again, and Governor Parsons said they shouldn't have it. Therefore they didn't like him.

Meanwhile we had arrived at a creek in a piece of woods, and we had to get out of the carriage to walk, for the banks of the creek were steep. The carriage and the mules were strong enough, but the boys thought the harness, "the old rig," would not hold out. True enough, while we were crossing the creek on a plank, the "old rig" broke when the carriage attempted to ascend the opposite bank. The trouble was great. The boys did not know how to help themselves, but a negro who came along driving another hack, knew. Half an hour's work started us again. The woods were excessively dark; one of the boys had to walk ahead with a candle in his hand. The "old rig" broke two or three times more. The boys knew how to swear. At 6 o'clock in the morning we reached Montgomery, still a little ahead of the stage coaches.

When we dismounted at the hotel, the boys for some reason suspected us of being Yankees.

"Are you from the North?" asked one.

"Yes. What of it?"

"Oh, we didn't know it when we talked so last night."

Enough now of travel in the South.

[Carl Schurz]

Book Reviews

Plain Folk of the Old South. By Frank L. Owsley. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949. 235 pp. \$3.50.

This is the eighth volume in the series of Walter Lynwood Fleming lectures delivered at Louisiana State University and published by its press. In many respects this is the best volume of the series, and certainly it is the most extensive. Professor Owsley's published work goes beyond the three lectures which he gave. It is indeed fortunate that this question of the plain folk in the ante-bellum South was considered by this historian. To begin with, he has the love and background to place the common plain man on paper as something other than a bumpkin living on the outskirts of the more gracious plantation system. But doubtless more important than these distinctly personal qualities, Owsley has been able to probe the whole question with the highly objective instrument of statistics without losing sight of the human qualities of the subject.

There were more plain people in the Old South than any other kind. Plain people here are defined both by an economic measuring stick, and by a social category which fall into a fairly well defined pattern of community life. The picture which has been built up since the publication of Frederick Law Olmstead's travel accounts, Cairnes' *Slave Power* and Hinton Rowan Helper's statistical studies of the non-slaveholding white man had the unfortunate "white trash" stigma. This volume safely clears away these meaningless cobwebs and presents a picture of southern life far removed from either of these prejudiced views or the other extreme of moonlight and roses. The first four essays or chapters deal with the subjects: "Southern Society: A Reinterpretation," "To the Promised Land," "Southern Folk Ways," and the "Role of the Plain Folk." The last-named is a statistical analysis of the social and economic structure of representative southern counties.

In reinterpreting the structure of ante-bellum society, Owsley has sampled many sources of information which are reliable in presenting a plain unvarnished picture of the people of the region. Among these are tax books, trial records, marriage records, wills, deeds, court

minutes, and inventories of estates. If there is any one place where a man reveals himself it is to the public personal records in which he is claiming a wife, arguing a lawsuit, or providing for his family's needs in a will. Fortunately the ante-bellum southerner could come clean with the public records and tell all. There were no tax-gatherers to spy on him; there was no one but possibly a creditor who prevented him from saying what he owned in a will, or kept his executors from making a truthful and full inventory of his property. These ancient records are far from being dull, yet Owsley is one of the first southern historians to tap this rich source of specific information. Into the whole re-interpretative picture is injected the question of slaveholding, and many conjectures on this issue are for the first time converted into trustworthy fact.

Migration across the South is one of the most fascinating sagas of folk movements. Again untapped sources reveal numbers, motives, routes, and processes which brought people pouring into the great southern frontier. There were drovers with lowing herds, men who were moving across the South seeking good, cheap lands, individuals who were running away from a past, restless adventurers who kept up with the spreading outer fringe of settlement for no other reason than to be there. The stock drover and grazer was a most important individual, and Owsley gives him a clear place in regional history. But of equally as much interest was the settler's way of life. They came with meager household furnishings to hew out a civilization of new vintage. Their houses were meagerly equipped, their social lives were often barren of the stimulus of more populous society. Out of this, however, came an everyday southern society which was equally as distinctive as that of the old plantation caste.

The plain man's social organization was a spontaneous reaction to raw frontier conditions. He was as vigorous in most instances as his environment in expressing himself in the social group. At church it was a powerful personal God to whom he appealed in an aroused frame of mind. The revival meeting was a place of emotional release, just as the camp meeting ground was a focus of rich social intercourse. Folk associations, however, went much further than religious activities. The common workings, the community dances, and the long journeys to market were all a part of southern community life. In writing of these, Owsley exhibits a nostalgia which is convincing in its genuineness. He has dealt with a difficult chapter in social history in such a way

as to give it both dignity and meaning in the explanation of the common folk.

Statistical tables interspersed in the final chapter of the text validate the rest of the book. Too, these tables present an eloquent picture of precise social structure in the Old South. The author has opened a new vista in social history, and has gone a long way toward setting an important sectional record straight.

THOMAS D. CLARK
University of Kentucky

Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect. By Lorenzo D. Turner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949: 317 pp. \$7.50.

It has long been thought that the Negro slave from Africa had very little effect on the English spoken in the southern states. A handful of words, such as *goober*, *hoodoo*, *juba*, *buckra*, and *gumbo* are known to be of African origin, but both philologists and anthropologists have thought that the Negroes simply gave up their own languages and adopted the English used by the white people on the plantations, without carrying over more than a trace of their native speech.

Two arguments are cited to support this conclusion: first, that most "Negroisms" such as *gwin* for *going*, *ingun* for *onion*, *toof* for *tooth*, *idn* for *isn't* and *whar* for *where* were common in the British English brought here in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and second, that the relatively isolated Negroes, such as the Gullahs of coastal South Carolina and Georgia, speak a dialect of English even among themselves with little or no African coloring. It is, of course, readily granted that southern Negroes, little affected by formal schooling, have preserved much of the older English that they originally learned from white people, and as house servants have returned that language to successive generations of white people.

However, before dismissing possible African influence, students of southern speech should have studied minutely at first hand the language of the Gullahs, who have lived apart from white people continuously since they were brought to the Georgia-Carolina coast and the sea islands. Attempts have been made, notably by Ambrose Gonzales, who wrote *The Black Border* and other Gullah stories, but apparently it is impossible for white men to overcome the racial bar-

rier and persuade Gullahs to talk freely in their vernacular for observation and study.

Professor Turner has been able to live among the Gullahs and record their normal speech. Furthermore, he is equipped, as earlier students have not been, with a knowledge of the principal languages of West Africa. His book, the product of fifteen years' study, makes it necessary to revise the orthodox description of Gullah, and suggests a re-examination of the possible effects of the African languages on Southern American English.

Turner's most dramatic point is his listing of over three thousand Gullah personal names of African origin, whereas previous students had not even mentioned the existence of non-English names in the dialect. He explains that the Gullahs simply do not use their African names around white people, some of them having two names (one English) and others never having an English name unless they get into a school and are given an English name by a teacher. Thus it is not surprising that earlier philologists could say that not one African word remained in the language. In addition to the names, Turner lists several hundred other words and phrases, and notes African features in grammar, word-formation, sounds, and speech-tunes. The inevitable conclusion is that we must revise our notion of Gullah as a combination of archaic English and baby-talk.

If we grant the fact that the slaves did not give up their native language immediately and completely, we have a basis for examining the possible effects of the West African languages on Southern American English. For example, it is well known that the words *juke* and *tote* gained currency in the South, but dictionaries have marked them 'origin uncertain.' Turner recorded *tote* in Gullah and also found a similar word in several African languages meaning 'to pick up' or 'to carry.' He found the term *joog-house* meaning 'disorderly house' or 'house of ill repute' in Gullah and a similar word in Wolof, a language spoken in Senegal and Gambia. It is known that our terms *juke-joint* and *juke-box* were first heard around southern turpentine camps; hence an African origin seems highly probable. These two examples indicate how Turner's work will be of value to the historian of southern speech.

Students of our dialects have not yet analyzed the differences in speech tunes (intonation) that are characteristic of certain areas and groups. When this is done, comparisons with Gullah and African intonation can be made, since Turner includes this feature.

Modern scholarship is slowly but surely building up an accurate account of the development of Southern culture. This book is a notable contribution to that account, both as a description of Gullah and as a basis for future studies.

JAMES B. McMILLAN
University of Alabama

Libraries of the Southeast: A Report of the Southeastern State Co-operative Library Survey, 1946-1947. Edited by Louis R. Wilson and Marion A. Milczewski. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949. xxiv 301 pp. \$2.50 paper, \$3.00 cloth.

The Southeast now has a complete study of its libraries and how they compare with regional and national standards, for this survey edited by Louis R. Wilson and Marion A. Milczewski reveals the status of all libraries in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

In public libraries citizens of the Southeast have one-third of a book each, spend 18c for all purposes, and borrow 1.3 books annually—about one-third the national average. In Alabama 47% of the citizens have no library services, as compared to 30% for the region. There are 14,000 persons for each public librarian, while 2,400 is the national average. Of 6.5 million school-age children, 5.6 million are “largely devoid of recognized benefits of school library service.” Only 488 of 2,248 replying schools met the standards of the Southern Association of College and Secondary Schools, and only 103 met national standards.

Libraries in institutions of higher education lagged behind other regions. The agricultural Southeast has no outstanding land-grant college library, and most libraries are weak in holdings of regional materials. Only in documents and historical manuscripts are there outstanding collections. In scientific and technical journals checked in 1942-43, Duke University rank 16th, Joint University Libraries 34th, North Carolina 43rd, and Virginia 47th in the nation. Southeastern college libraries average 43.6 books per student and Alabama's 27.6—this despite the University's doubling its holdings 3 times during 1926-37, an increase of 1064%. Annually \$1,600-\$3,000 was paid to 65.5% of college library employees, a scale greatly below acceptable

standards. The Southeast spent \$18.73 per college student, but Alabama spent only \$15.15.

The Southeast will have to change its thinking on libraries and support them more adequately, if conditions are ever to be improved in this region. The need is imperative.

Milczewski directed the assembling of data, and to Dr. Louis R. Wilson, that patron saint of southern librarianship, is due the credit of analysing and interpreting the information and preparing the report in clear, readable style. All educators and public officials should study this volume seriously.

CLYDE H. CANTRELL

Alabama Polytechnic Institute

State Planning and Economic Development in the South. By Albert Lepawsky. National Planning Association Committee of the South, 1949. xiv, 193 pp. \$3.00.

This little volume, although by title a study of state planning and economic development in the South, is in reality a study of the activities of the planning and development boards or similar departments or agencies in fifteen southern states. In order "to keep the study within manageable proportions," as the author states, "its coverage has also been limited by an emphasis upon the work of the one major agency engaged in planning and development in each of the states."

In his opening chapter Dr. Lepawsky, Professor of Public Administration at the University of Alabama, correctly points out that although state planning on a comprehensive basis began in the late 1920's and early 1930's, state development programs first appeared in the 1820's and have continued for a full century. After a decade of state planning there was a reemphasis on state development in the 1940's which resulted in the creation in most of the southern states of a single dual-purpose planning and development board. The functions of these boards he discusses under two main chapter headings: Development of Natural and Economic Resources, and Planning for Public and Social Service. The succeeding chapters deal respectively with regional, interstate and federal-state relations and with the administration of state planning and development. A chapter of summary and conclusions completes the volume.

Having organized and for three years directed the Georgia planning and development board, this reviewer read Lepawsky's study with a great deal of interest. As a research study it is good, but at the same time, from the reader's standpoint, it leaves something to be desired. In the first place, the title is misleading—it should have been "State Planning and Development Agencies in the South." In the second place, there is little effort made to relate the work of planning and development agencies to the problems of the region, either in economic or social service fields. The relatively low standard of living, the need for improved educational and public health facilities, the discriminatory freight rate structure—these are some of the problems which southern planning and development agencies have had to tackle. There is little or no mention, however, of these or other problems of a similar nature.

The author is too much concerned over the alleged failure in the South to reconcile planning and development either in principle or in practice. At the same time, however, he does not define either term and his discussion of the subject leads to the conclusion that he himself is responsible for creating a part of the confusion which he attributes to the planning agencies themselves. It would have been relatively easy to define one or both words, or to use such a term as "developmental planning," which describes about as accurately as possible the work which is being done in the South.

Several errors of fact in connection with the Georgia program were noted. The Georgia board did not produce the state master hospital plan, as Lepawsky states (p. 109). It prepared, in coöperation with the Department of Health, a public health program for the state which the latter adopted as its long-term objective. Again (p. 119), it is stated that the government panel of the Georgia board "not only acted as a legislative reference and bill-drafting service but has conducted the research . . . for the revision of the Georgia constitution. . . .". The Georgia board drafted only those bills which it submitted to the legislature through the governor's office, and it did none of the research on the revised constitution. It did, however, as stated, through a special committee, conduct the state-wide campaign for ratification.

Professor Lepawsky has performed a useful service in describing the major activities of southern planning and development boards. It is to be regretted, however, that he did not utilize the opportunity to relate his research more closely to the southern scene, and that he

concerned himself so much with theoretical distinction between planning and development which are not of primary importance in analyzing the work of the agencies which he has otherwise so carefully studied.

L. V. HOWARD
Tulane University

Alabama's First Railroad Commission, 1881-1885. By James F. Doster. University, Alabama: privately printed, 1949. iv, 192 pp.

Professor Doster has produced a very realistic and useful study in the important field of the relations of government to business. Starting with an account of early railroad promotion and regulation in Alabama, he surveys the development of regulation in other states during the 1870's which resulted in the employment of commissions as agencies for regulation. He then shows how the Alabama Railroad Commission Act of 1881 was the by-product of rapid consolidation during the years 1879-1891 of the roads serving the state, pointing out that the chief leadership for this legislation came from Montgomery, whose competitive position as a trade center had been particularly threatened by the consolidations.

The Act of 1881 was well planned, and its terms were reasonable. Railroad men felt it was much more moderate, especially with respect to control of rates, than the Georgia law. The power of the Alabama Commissioners, all able men, lay in their ability to investigate and give publicity to their findings. The Commission carried out with care the requirements of the statute. Railroad inspections were made. Tariffs were reviewed and revised. Complaints were investigated thoroughly and ably. The book contains a wealth of excellent illustrations of these activities.

On the other hand, Doster brings out clearly the economic and legal factors that placed limits upon what the Commission could do. It could not control water competition which forced rates downward, the reductions being discriminations against places having no water competition. It could not develop traffic or make railroads prosperous. It had no power to build roads or force owners of capital to make loans for the purpose. It could not reduce rates, except to correct unjust discrimination, unless earnings were reasonably compensatory.

In attempting to protect Opelika from a competitive situation in interstate commerce over which it had no control, the Commission followed a policy that led the carriers to believe their revenues in Alabama would be put in serious jeopardy. Commercial interests, desiring further railroad expansion, feared the Commission's policy would discourage it. Hence they supported the carriers in securing the defeat of bills designed to implement this policy.

The Railroad Commission of Alabama was successful insofar as it confined itself to fields suitable for its activities, but when the body tried to do things beyond the scope of possible accomplishments, it failed.

In his study Doster displays an excellent technical grasp of railway economics and the real forces shaping rate-making. His analysis of the economic problems and interests of the South in this period is penetrating and interesting. His industry in collecting masses of evidence to explain the forces moulding the attitudes of the carriers, the commercial interests, the editors, the legislators, and the citizens at large has made this volume a substantial contribution to the literature on government and business. Members of our many present-day regulatory bodies would find it profitable reading.

MARCUS WHITMAN
University of Alabama

Technical Assistance to Alabama Governments: A Directory. University, Alabama: Bureau of Public Administration, 1949. 185 pp.

This *Directory* was compiled as a part of a coöperative program for the study of government in the South. Similar volumes have been issued in Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. All Alabama governmental agencies of a non-profit nature which render aid to themselves and to the public are listed under twenty-six general headings, ranging from Airports and Aviation to Waste Disposal. Although the volume has no author, Marshall Fitzpatrick and A. S. Moore are credited with assembling and editing the data under the supervision of Roscoe C. Martin, erstwhile Director of the Bureau of Public Administration of the University of Alabama. The Foreword was supplied by Dr. Martin's successor, York Willbern.

W. STANLEY HOOLE
University of Alabama

Research, Education, and Regionalism. By Rowland Egger and Weldon Cooper. University, Alabama: Bureau of Public Administration, 1949. 234 pp.

This volume is a case study of the University of Alabama's Bureau of Public Administration, a descriptive and evaluative report by two experts of the University of Virginia. As a step in a national program of examination of such bureaus, Egger and Cooper made an intensive study of the Alabama agency, which is recognized as one of the most active in the country.

Conceived in 1937 and established in 1938, this bureau has engaged in governmental research, service to state and local governments, and training programs for public service. It has received considerable financial support from national foundations, and has pioneered in regional programs which fit areas larger than states. An impressive list of publications have been issued under its imprint.

Egger and Cooper describe its history, personnel, budget, research projects, services and service programs, training programs and its special lectures series, with special attention to the Southern Regional Training Program, under which graduate students receive instruction in three southern universities and serve an apprenticeship in public service positions.

In concluding their study the authors say "The accomplishments of the Bureau during the first decade by any standards of comparison are notable."

JAMES B. McMILLAN
University of Alabama

News and Notices

THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
THIRD ANNUAL MEETING
Selma, Alabama, Friday-Saturday, April 7-8, 1950

PROGRAM

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

- Afternoon registration, beginning at 3:30 p.m. at the Hotel Albert.
- 7:45 Evening Session—Dr. John M. Gallalee, President, University of Alabama, presiding—Church Street Methodist Church.
- Invocation: Dr. John W. Frazer, Pastor, Church Street Methodist Church, Selma.
- Remarks: *The Alabama Historical Association*—Dr. Ralph B. Draughon, President, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn.
- Introduction of General James W. Moore, Selma, Guest of Honor.
- Selma, 1861-1865*—Rucker Agee, Birmingham.
- Introduction by Earl M. McGowin, Chapman.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8

- Morning registration, beginning at 8:30 at the Albert G. Parrish High School.
- 10:00 General Assembly—Peter A. Brannon, President of the Association, presiding—Albert Parrish High School.
- Welcome: Mayor Ralph Nicholson, Selma.
- Response: Miss Ethel Marshall, Montevallo.
- Introduction of Guests: William H. Brantley, Birmingham.
- 10:45 Morning Session (1)—Dr. James F. Doster, University of Alabama, presiding.
- The Alabama Constitution of 1819*—Dr. Malcolm C. McMillan, Auburn.
- River Ferries in Alabama Prior to 1861*—Dr. George V. Irons, Howard College, Birmingham.

Hostesses: Mrs. James R. Goetz, Birmingham; Miss E. Grace Jemison, Talladega; Mrs. Thomas Seay, Marion; Mrs. Joseph G. Moore, Birmingham; Mrs. F. J. Sauer, Mobile.

10:45 Morning Session (2)—Edwin C. Osburn, Athens College, presiding.

Source Material for Histories of Alabama Families—Mrs. B. W. Gandrud, Tuscaloosa.

The Career of Admiral Raphael Semmes before the Cruise of the Sumter—Dr. Charles G. Summersell, University.

Hostesses: Dr. Agnes Ellen Harris, University; Miss Elizabeth Archibald, Eutaw; Mrs. H. B. Chase, Huntsville; Miss Gussie Killian, Portersville; Mrs. H. H. Wefel, Mobile.

12:00 Brief tour of Selma under the auspices of the Selma Chamber of Commerce.

1:00 Barbecue Luncheon on "Old Road" to Cahawba—Carl Edwards, Selma, Master of Ceremonies.

Invocation: Dr. A. G. Moseley, Orrville.

2:00 Afternoon Session—John W. Lapsley, Vice President of the Association, presiding—Cahawba.

President's Annual Address—*The Confederate Military Prison at Cahawba*—Peter A. Brannon, Montgomery.

Introduction by Thomas W. Martin, Birmingham.

Remarks: *The Alabama Review*—Dr. W. Stanley Hoole, Editor, University.

Report of Secretary—James F. Sulzby, Jr., Birmingham.

Report of Treasurer—Miss Maud McLure Kelly, Montgomery.

Business and Election of Officers.

Dedication of Cahawba Historic Marker—Hill Ferguson, Chairman, Birmingham.

Acceptance: Mrs. Carl Edwards, Chairman of the Cahawba Memorial Commission, Selma.

3:30 Adjournment.

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Mr. Fred S. Watson of Enterprise has recently published a delightfully written and most informative volume, *Piney Woods Echoes: A History of Dale and Coffee Counties, Alabama*. Encyclopedic in approach, the book discusses briefly

each community within the counties and much space is devoted to important personalities. Copies of this interesting study may be had from the author or by writing the publisher, the *Elba Clipper*, Elba, Alabama.

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As Wild Doves Fly is the title of a small volume of lyric poems by Josephine Aldrich Harris of Homewood, Birmingham, Alabama. Issued by the Banner Press, Emory University, Georgia, the book contains an appreciative essay by the well-known Archibald Rutledge, who declares that "this is a book that will not be easily laid aside; and it can never be forgotten." Autographed copies (\$2) may be obtained from the author, P. O. Box 5732, Homewood.

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The first number of *The Alabama Librarian*, official organ of the Alabama Library Association, has been issued. Edited by Mabel E. Willoughby, Librarian of Howard College, the quarterly will be devoted to "news of the Association, its members, sections, and the addresses of conference speakers, as well as general articles." Business Manager of the *Librarian* is Fant Thornley, Reference Librarian of the Birmingham Public Library.

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The Colonial Book Shop of Mobile has rendered an outstanding service to Alabamians by recently reprinting in a facsimile edition Peter J. Hamilton's *The Founding of Mobile* (1911) and by publishing for the first time (1947) that noted author's *A Little Boy in Confederate Mobile*, a new manuscript edited with a Preface by his daughter,

Rachel-Duke Hamilton Cannon. Dr. Hamilton's *The Chevalier d'Iberville*, also edited by his daughter and issued by the Historic Mobile Preservation Society (1948), is now available in book form. It is a reprint of an address delivered before the Iberville Historical Society and published as a series in the *Mobile Register*, March 16, 23, 30, 1902. These titles by one of Alabama's best known historians are available at the Colonial Book Shop for \$1.75, \$2, and \$1.25, respectively.

